

Love Between Worlds:
Edward Burne-Jones and the Theology of Art

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the theological formation of Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898) and argues that his artistic vision was shaped by and became a practice of *theology*. Burne-Jones was drawn to the controversial Oxford 'Tractarian' Movement and pursued education at the University of Oxford to become an Anglican priest. He was inspired by John Henry Newman, who lived and preached in Birmingham during Burne-Jones's adolescence. Contrary to most scholarship, I argue for the continuing prevalence of the Tractarian theological perspective in his art, even after he decided not to preach or practise conventional religion. His art is deeply informed by the complex theological principles he studied. This becomes what I identify as a *theology of art* that considers and presents theological ideas not in words but in art.

I have conducted archival research into Burne-Jones's personal history and education, and the theological figures, debates, and controversies that shaped him. This included letters and diaries of mentors and friends of Burne-Jones which have been scarcely accessed. Furthermore, Burne-Jones's own university notebooks and letters have shown direct evidence of Burne-Jones's theological knowledge. I have also pursued extensive research into theology and church history, particularly of Anglicanism before and in the nineteenth century. To understand how this translates into his artistic practice, I have researched and interpreted various works and projects of Burne-Jones, emphasising his methods of design. This has led to a wide-ranging assessment of his drawings in print rooms across Britain. Ultimately, I argue for the recurrence of the theological and artistic theme I call *love between worlds*, a concept connecting Burne-Jones's study of the Tractarian notions of incarnation, sacramentality, and God's love expressed through the economy of salvation in Christ, and the subject of the pursuit of romantic love that pervades Burne-Jones's artistic projects.

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Figure 79. Edward Burne-Jones, *The Samaritan Woman at the Well with angels*, c. 1880s, stained glass window, St. Peter’s Vere Street, London, U.K. Source: A. Charles Sewter, *The Stained Glass of William Morris and His Circle*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974.

Figure 80. Photographs of Edward Burne-Jones, *Annunciation* and *Morning of Resurrection Altarpiece*, St. Peter’s Vere Street, London. Source: Witt Library, Courtauld, London.

Figure 81. Edward Burne-Jones, *The Prioress’s Tale*, c. 1896-1898, watercolour with gouache on paper mounted on linen, 103.378 x 62.738 cm, Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington, U.S.A. Source: Delaware Art Museum.

<https://emuseum.delart.org/objects/10648/the-prioresss-tale>.

Figure 82. Edward Burne-Jones, Sketch for the *Kelmscott Chaucer* ‘Prioress Tale’, c. 1892-6, pencil on paper, dimensions unknown, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, U.K. Source: Graham Robertson Print Room, Fitzwilliam Museum.

Figure 83. Edward Burne-Jones, ‘The Prioress’s Tale (left side)’, *Kelmscott Chaucer*, c. 1896. Source: Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer: Now Newly Imprinted*. Hammersmith, UK: Kelmscott Press, 1896.

Figure 84. Edward Burne-Jones, ‘The Prioress’s Tale (right side)’, *Kelmscott Chaucer*, c. 1896. Source: Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer: Now Newly Imprinted*. Hammersmith, UK: Kelmscott Press, 1896.

Figure 85. Edward Burne-Jones, *The Last Sleep of Arthur in Avalon*, c. 1881-89, oil on canvas, 279 cm × 650 cm, Museo de Arte de Ponce, Puerto Rico. Source: Useum Beta.

<https://useum.org/artwork/The-Last-Sleep-of-Arthur-in-Avalon-Edward-Burne-Jones-1881-1>.

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Declaration

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.

I hereby acknowledge publications that have arisen out of this thesis. These works are not taken explicitly from chapters of the dissertation but are original pieces that have been inspired by my argument and research. They are as follows:

Co-author, 'The Making of a Triptych: The Annunciation and Adoration of the Magi 1861 by Edward Burne-Jones' *Tate Papers* (pending Winter 2021-22).

'The Spaces Between: Edward Burne-Jones and the Waters of Heaven,' *The Review of the Pre-Raphaelite Society* (Summer 2020).

'Edward Burne-Jones: Super-Naturalist Painter'' *Aspectus* Issue 1. (Fall 2019).

“It is clear I am a heretic”: Edward Burne-Jones, Theology, and Artistic “Heresy,” *The Review of the Pre-Raphaelite Society* (Spring 2018).

'The Adoration of Kings: Mary and the Beggar Maid,' *The Review of the Pre-Raphaelite Society* (Autumn 2017).

This thesis was completed during COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions. Due to these circumstances, I was unable to cross-check certain archival citations or image entries, particularly the dimensions of a few sketches that I had consulted in print rooms before the pandemic. These are marked with 'dimensions unknown'.

Introduction

In 1875, Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898) designed a vast central window for the church of All Hallows, Allerton, East Liverpool (Figure 1). He created a large cartoon for the commission, *Paradise with the Worship of the Holy Lamb*, which he kept, later coloured and exhibited to great critical acclaim.¹ In *The Athenaeum*, F.G. Stephens claimed that ‘this large picture has no superior in the room’, describing ‘the superbly beautiful disposition of the general colour’ especially ‘in the white robes, the rich verdure, and the scintillations of the spirits’ wings’.² Not sold until after the artist’s death, however, it passed from the hands of Lord Plymouth to fashion designer Yves-Saint Laurent, greatly increasing in value when it was sold again in 2018 for nearly one million dollars.³ The complex history of this work raises questions about its origins as a religious commission, its potential for aesthetic attraction in exhibition and sale as an independent work, and ultimately, the relationship of the religious subject matter to its ‘beautiful disposition’ and why Burne-Jones himself would return to the work after he had initially finished it as a design for stained-glass.⁴

In the coloured, exhibited piece, the descending rivers teem brilliant blue, and the same iridescent blue accents the wings, crowns, and haloes of the angels, the eagle, and the central Lamb itself. Colour and symbolism are tightly interwoven here, so much so that it may be argued the symbolic religious meaning disappears in the harmony of composition. A ‘Holy Lamb’, in traditional Christian discourse and art, refers to the mysterious culmination

¹ ‘Lot Essay: *Paradise, with the Worship of the Holy Lamb*,’ *Christie’s European Art I* (31 October 2018), Christie’s Auctions and Private Sales, accessed 7 May 2020 https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/Lot/sir-edward-coley-burne-jones-bart-ara-rws-6166387-details.aspx?fbclid=IwAR093G3DTLmq2cFTz1GJQD2BDrKA130c0uIO_eZ04mLpIbQmTdgkbS49bDM.

² F.G. Stephens, ‘The Grosvenor Gallery Exhibition (Second Notice),’ *The Athenaeum*, no. 2776 (8 January 1881): 61-62.

³ ‘Lot Essay: *Paradise, with the Worship of the Holy Lamb*.’ *Christie’s European Art I*.

⁴ Stephens, ‘The Grosvenor Gallery,’ 61-62.

of the heavenly banquet described in the Book of Revelation.⁵ However one may simply ask: does the religious nature of the work matter?

Often Burne-Jones can be recognised for his dream worlds of pale women on canvas and glittering stained-glass angels now popularized by widely circulated Christmas cards. Recently, he has gained further contemporary notice, with an extensive Tate Britain exhibition in 2018-19 featuring works spanning his lifetime.⁶ Upon entering the gallery, visitors were immediately faced with a vast altarpiece on the opposite wall, glowing from its recent restoration. It was flanked with stained-glass windowpanes reinstalled with their own backlighting. The other works in the room testified to Burne-Jones's budding potential as an artist, as he trained with Dante Gabriel Rossetti, G.F. Watts, and John Ruskin. A long room of sketches and designs, and successive rooms of his major works, series, designs, and portraits followed. Like *Paradise*, the exhibition testified to the integrated nature of Burne-Jones's vast and varied oeuvre, as he combined and intermingled projects for design with works for exhibition and sale. Huge serial mythical paintings appeared beside canvases of religious subjects, or tapestry of Christian and Arthurian legend. While some more critical writers may simply be 'bored' by Burne-Jones's variegated presentation of beauty,⁷ visitors to the exhibition and newcomers to his work may have been compelled to wonder at the persistent mixing of religious ideas with fantastical ones – and ultimately, a sense of mystery that pervades and persists in them all. Amid the mermaids, sorceresses, and sleepy princesses, we may wonder again if the content of the religious pictures beside them really meant anything to Burne-Jones himself – and, ultimately, if the religious aspect of his art could be a

⁵ Revelation 19:7-9 (King James Version).

⁶ 'Edward Burne-Jones,' Tate Britain, 24 October 2018-24 February 2019.

⁷ Jonathan Jones, 'Edward Burne-Jones – Art that Shows How Boring Beauty Can Be,' *The Guardian*, 22 October 2018, accessed 1 March 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/oct/22/edward-burne-jones-review-preraphaelite-tate-britain>.

part of why his work as a whole could be compelling, complex, and potentially confusing or mystifying.

Writing in the later years around the time of his creation of the *Paradise* design, Edward Burne-Jones heralded controversial Tractarian-turned-Catholic Cardinal John Henry Newman (1801-1890) as his early hero who taught him ‘things that will never be out of me’.⁸ Indeed, Burne-Jones had many such heroic figures in his life, ranging from John Ruskin to F.D. Maurice to Algernon Charles Swinburne. And yet, in these later times of his mature artistic life, it was Newman he remembered from his formative years in which he studied not art but theology.

Burne-Jones and his work were situated in the midst of a century of both religious and artistic debate. In his youth he had aspired to be an Anglican priest of the Oxford Movement – a controversial group of theologians formed by Newman, E.B. Pusey, John Keble and other young university thinkers who sought to challenge the spiritual and political direction of the Church of England. The Movement began in 1833, the year of Burne-Jones’s birth, and though he would not go up to university himself until almost two decades after the height of ‘Tractarianism’, their theology persisted as an influence through his early education. Arguably, this influence would continue when he sought his new profession as an artist with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, yet another controversial group of young artists challenging aesthetic and spiritual ideas.

This thesis argues for the place of theology in Burne-Jones’s formation and development as an artist. As a prolific multimedia designer and painter whose creations stretch across the second half of the nineteenth century, Burne-Jones’s corpus is notably idiosyncratic and diverse in subject, style, and theme. However, his various works are notably

⁸ Georgiana Burne-Jones, *The Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones* vol. 1 (London: Chiswick Press, 1905), 59.

united by a unique sense of mystery, or dreaminess, recognised by fellow artists and critics of his own day and ours.⁹ Even the 2018 Tate Britain exhibition proved this, inspiring some reviewers to disdain his work while drawing attention from the public and academia.¹⁰ This dissertation seeks to question elements of the distinct mysteriousness that pervade Burne-Jones's art; the sense of a strange otherworldliness that some love and some loathe. Rather than seeing his works as potential examples of escapism or dreamy aestheticism, here it will be argued that theological principles of his youth shaped and guided his artistic practice. Furthermore, his art will be considered a 'theology' of a kind, not simply reflecting religious themes or debates but themselves considering and crafting in a visual language questions and ideas about the relation of natural and supernatural, ideal and real, God and humanity. Indeed, the initial example of *Paradise with the Worship of the Holy Lamb* could owe some of its pervading mysteriousness to the sacramental theology of the Tractarian thinkers who influenced Burne-Jones in his formation. As to be seen in subsequent chapters, the figure of the 'Holy Lamb' is an important typological aspect of the eucharist for the Tractarians and would even be mentioned by Burne-Jones himself, as he transitioned from his studies of theology to his study of art.¹¹

To further explore these ideas, this dissertation engages directly with the original archival sources of his youth and of the theological movement that inspired and shaped him. Much as anything anyone does for the first twenty-three years of one's life, this extended

⁹ Colin Cruise, "'Sick-sad dreams': Burne-Jones and the Pre-Raphaelite Medievalism," *The Yearbook of English Studies* 40, no. ½ (2010): 127; Melanie McDonagh, 'Edward Burne-Jones Review: All He Touches He Makes Beautiful at Tate Britain' *The Standard*, 23 October 2018, accessed 1 March 2020, <https://www.standard.co.uk/go/london/arts/edward-burne-jones-tate-britain-review-a3968886.html> ; Katherine Waters, 'Edward Burne-Jones Review – Time for a Rethink?' *The Arts Desk*, 12 November 2018, accessed 1 March 2020, <https://theartsdesk.com/visual-arts/edward-burne-jones-tate-britain-review-time-rethink>.

¹⁰ Jones, 'Edward Burne-Jones – Art that Shows How Boring Beauty Can Be,' *The Guardian*; Laura Cumming, 'Edward Burne-Jones Review – An endless procession of the living dead' *The Guardian*, 28 October 2018, accessed 1 March 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/oct/28/edward-burne-jones-tate-britain-review-laura-cumming>.

¹¹ Edward Burne-Jones, 'Essay on *The Newcomes*,' *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* (January, 1856), 55; see Chapter 2, 'The Secret of the Marriage of the Lamb'.

period of formative education could be seen to influence him for the rest of his life and to have consequences for the way he viewed the world. It is therefore my claim that not just Burne-Jones's religious and personal, political and social views are shaped by Tractarianism. I argue that his intellectual development as a theologian imbues his art with theological principles – that his whole mode of creation and approach is directed by the particular Tractarian principles of *incarnation, sacrament, liturgy, and tradition*. For the Oxford Movement, these principles are deeply and creatively related to the *mystery* of God and the living faith of man as handed down through the supernatural institution of the church.¹² I will argue that the study of these principles is an important beginning for understanding the love and the hate, the bewilderment and the mystification, that Burne-Jones's idiosyncratic works have inspired. This theological study could provide an underlying principle that may give his large and various corpus its unified sense of mystery. I will argue that the works, explicitly religious or mythically fantastic, are the grounds for a 'theology of art': an art that explores and studies the reality of the mysterious relation between God and man. This dissertation therefore will seek to offer a new framework of interpretation for Burne-Jones's work. More broadly, my claim that his work was essentially a theological exercise is relevant for the wider field of nineteenth century studies in the history of art and design, as it challenges a narrative of increased secularization and instead proposes one about art and society's continued search for deeper religious meaning. My theoretical framework – 'the theology of art' – will offer a method for inquiring into this latter approach, clarifying the foggy picture painted by the prevailing use of the phrase 'religion of art', which loosely has connoted art's replacement of religion in the period after the Enlightenment.¹³ This 'theology of art' will

¹² Frances Knight, *The Church in the Nineteenth Century* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 15; Elisabeth Jay, *Faith and Doubt in Victorian Britain* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 24-5; See Chapter 1, 'Burne-Jones, The Oxford Movement, and Nineteenth Century Christianity'.

¹³ See, for example, Karl Beckson's article on 'Oscar Wilde and the Religion of Art', in which he discusses what is now the accepted historiographical assessment of the development of nineteenth century art and

also engage with new areas of studies for scholars of theology and religious history, showing how the visual actively engages and even shapes theological conceptions through history.

The ‘Theology of Art’

In this thesis, I propose the term ‘theology of art’ as it is situated in an ongoing discussion on the relevance of ‘theology and the arts’.¹⁴ This ‘theology of art’ seeks to understand art as possessing theological potential. Much as ‘the piano and Georgiana’ differs in meaning from ‘the piano of Georgiana’, ‘theology of art’ suggests not only an intimacy between the two subjects of theology and art, but art in the role of ownership, as it were – art having and possessing theological elements or aspects. Theology in this case becomes a potential activity of art. ‘Theology’, in its Greek root, is understood as words about God, and is conducted as such – with words in textual and oral expression. It would seem that dealing with ideas of theology in visual terms could pose complications, and the history of the Christian church has debated these complications and the role of images in religious life and theological debate from iconoclasm to the construction and use of art in churches and worship across denominations in more recent times.

Bearing these complexities and potential complications in mind, we could look beyond these historical debates and turn to Fra Angelico as a model for a theology of art, in

literature (Beckson, ‘Oscar Wilde and the Religion of Art’ *The Wildean*, no. 12 [January 1998]: 25-29). Graham Howes, citing Max Weber as early as 1910, that ‘art thus competes with religion as another set of supreme values antithetical to those prevailing in society’ (*The Art of the Sacred: An Introduction to the Aesthetics of Art and Belief* [London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007], 43-44). The idea that art became an alternative means of transcendence to religion in this period was contributed to by Columbia professor Jacques Barzun in his chapter ‘The Rise of Art as Religion’ in his 1974 book, *The Use and Abuse of Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974). Though this phrase embodies part of the development of the aesthetic movement in the nineteenth century, the concept ‘religion of art’, and art’s replacement of religion, has come to be broadly used in the scholarship to disregard the role of religion in the modernist canon of art. See also: Colleen Denney, *At the Temple of Art: The Grosvenor Gallery, 1877-1890* (London: Associated University Presses, 2000); Hilary Fraser, *Aesthetics and Religion in Victorian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Stephen Cheeke, *Transfiguration: The Religion of Art in Nineteenth-Century Literature before Aestheticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

¹⁴ Kimberly Vrundy and Wilson Yates, *Arts, Theology, and the Church: New Intersections* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2005). See further discussion on ‘theology and the arts’ field below.

which art itself – its making and its reception – activates and perpetuates theological thinking.¹⁵ Fra Angelico, a monk working in the specific context of a Dominican cell, uses not words but images to express the theological ideas that surround him in the life and debate of a Florentine monastery. The theology surrounding the moment of the Annunciation, for instance, is worked through his artistic imagination as it engages in the action of making and construction.¹⁶ Even within the process of making, the artist is also beholder, and continues to remake the image before it is completed. The contemplative, prayerful beholding not only of the artist but of the other members of the monastery further activates the theology of the image as it is remade within their religious engagement and theological imagination. On the one hand, religious images such as these generally could be considered useful, or debated as controversial and idolatrous, for actual religious life and practice – as potential educational illustrations or deformations of Scriptural or moral principles. However, a ‘theology of art’ is important here insofar as it sees art not as a mere illustration or idol but as an articulation through the action of making, of seeing, of materializing – often materializing things that are theologically considered immaterial. Take again the example of Fra Angelico’s *Annunciation* images, where he depicts a moment at which the unseen action of impregnation by the Holy Spirit takes place at the annunciation of an angel.¹⁷ Theology may discuss this moment and its implications in the traditional medium of words and prompt further theological thinking on the subject. However, theology as the activity of art may work through these same theological principles or debates but may present new or different aspects of the mystery. In the very action of creation, art may engage with various theological themes of creation that can go untouched – or, rather, unseen – by words. Imagining, and through the

¹⁵ Here I am beginning to draw from Georges Didi-Huberman, *Fra Angelico: Dissemblance and Figuration*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990); these ideas will be discussed further below.

¹⁶ Sarah Drummond, *Divine Conception: The Art of the Annunciation* (London: Unicorn Publishing Group LLP, 2018), 15.

¹⁷ Luke 1:26-38 KJV.

imaginary, making, seeing, and revelation is the artistic process that poses the potential for new theological insight enabling an artist to create or possess a ‘theology of art’. This in turn could permit the lay viewer or academic scholar to imagine, make, and behold a ‘theology of art’ within the image itself.

These ideas engage with a current interest of theological and artistic scholarship that corresponds with the challenges of the perceptibly ‘modern’ world of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries that push religious institutions and persons to question their relation to visual culture and its role in current theology and worship.¹⁸ Conversely, artists and art historians also have begun turning a fresh eye to the role of religion, spirituality, and theological ideas that counter a long century of scholars and artists predominately turning away from a religious outlook.¹⁹ Literary scholars also have been exploring theological ideas in the works of authors, novelists, and poets, especially in relation to modernism and modernist themes.²⁰ ‘Theology and art’, and the relationships ‘between’ theology and art, have been an important way of engaging scholars across disciplines and ecumenical contexts.²¹ ‘Visual Theology’ has been a fruitful term that has brought international scholars

¹⁸ ‘...this new climate reminds the church of its own deeper dream and here we have the intramural aspect. What forms will a theopoetic take today which both quicken the tradition and at the same time speak to the general imagination of the age?...A creative theopoetic is called for, therefore, not only to vitalize a traditional theology but also to relate our Christian experience to the new sensibility of our time and its images and cults’ (Amos Niven Wilder, *Theopoetic: Theology and the Religious Imagination* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976], 6-7); Howes, *The Art of the Sacred*, 146-8; Timothy Verdon, *Art and Prayer: The Beauty of Turning to God* (Brewster, MA and Barga, Italy: Paraclete Press, 2014).

¹⁹ T.J. Clark, *Heaven on Earth: Painting and the Life to Come* (London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 2018); Thomas Crow, *No Idols: The Missing Theology of Art* (Australia: Power Publications, 2017); Timothy Gorringer, *Earthly Visions: Theology and the Challenges of Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); James D. Herbert, *Our Distance from God: Studies of the Divine and the Mundane in Western Art and Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

²⁰ Erik Tønning, *Modernism and Christianity* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014); Sean Connolly, *Inklings of Heaven: C.S. Lewis and Eschatology* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2007); Anna Svendsen, ‘The Shape of Sacrifice in David Jones’ Landscape of War’ (PhD dissertation, York: University of York, 2018).

²¹ Vrundy and Yates, *Arts, Theology, and the Church: New Intersection*, viii; Yates, ‘The Theology of Arts Legacy,’ in *Arts, Theology, and the Church*, 1-2; “‘Theology’ – and especially Christian theology – and “the arts” – and especially the visual arts – are not two discrete entities. They can be seen rather as twin media by which the world is interpreted and represented’ (Howes, *The Art of the Sacred*, 147).

– artists, art historians, and theologians – together for two conferences and publications.²²

New journals, online publications and databases, and events continue the work of questioning and integrating the disciplines, raising new questions about artistic making, scholarly methodology, cultural practice, and religious belief.²³

As discussed above, this thesis proposes a ‘theology of art’ in which theology could be considered an activity of art. Indeed, there remains the possibility of a relationship between theology as a discipline and art as a discipline – for ‘theology and art’ – but to see art as in possession of its own specific theological language is my emphasis here.²⁴ In this I am following the idea of theologian Ben Quash, who examines paintings of Vittore Carpaccio which could be considered ‘works of theology...[which] are indeed theology of a kind’.²⁵ To do this Quash first looks at the historical context, and then next at ‘the theological ideas that appear to be made thinkable by that context when an imagination like Carpaccio’s sets to work in its midst. This too will involve a close examination of the painting’s content, but will handle it as a work of theological as well as painterly art, capable of rendering new

²² Sheona Beaumont and Madeleine Emerald Thiele, *Visual Theology*, accessed 1 December 2018, <https://www.visualtheology.org.uk/about/>.

²³ *The Visual Commentary on Scripture*, accessed 1 February 2019, <https://thevcs.org/>; *Center for the Study of Material and Visual Cultures of Religion*, accessed 1 March 2021, <https://mavcor.yale.edu/>; *Catholicism, Literature, and the Arts*, Centre for Catholic Studies University of Durham, accessed 1 August 2018, <https://www.durham.ac.uk/research/institutes-and-centres/catholic-studies/research/catholicism-literature-and-art-/>; Anna Svendsen and Katherine Hinzman, *Catholicism and the Arts York*, accessed 1 October 2017 <http://catholicismandtheartsyork.blogspot.com/>.

²⁴ Graham Howes indicates this in his chapter on ‘Theology and the Visual Arts’ when he says: ‘In this sense, to do theology is not to know God in a particularly modern way, but to respond to God through the weight and structure of a given language. That language should, where possible, be both verbal and visual, *embodying both a theology of the arts and art as an expression of theology* [emphasis added]’ (*The Art of the Sacred*, 156). He reflects upon how this can be considered by theology and theologians by summarizing John Dillenberger’s ‘three-fold continuum’ in *A Theology of Artistic Sensibilities* of 1986 (156). For this dissertation, it is the ‘third and final point on Dillenberger’s continuum of theological responses to art’ that recognises that ‘*the arts themselves provide paradigms and images that affect the nature of theological methods*’ (162). Nevertheless, how this can be affectively considered happening in the artworks themselves is not necessarily discussed and is the focus of this ‘theology of art’ here in the context of Burne-Jones and his ‘theology of art’.

²⁵ Ben Quash, *Found Theology: History, Imagination and the Holy Spirit* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 93.

theological insight conceivable'.²⁶ My own method will consider this pattern, in which the historical context of Burne-Jones's early education will set the scene for historical and theological issues that could be at play in his own theologically visual articulations.

Nevertheless, Quash here has a distinctly different enterprise than what is proposed in this dissertation. As a theologian, Quash has a theological task at hand and a theological point to make. He proposes a theology in which art can be seen as the expression of bestowed grace, where the artist himself discovers art as a 'found' object because it is received from the Holy Spirit.²⁷ In this he brings his own theological background and arguments to bear on examples of theology and art through history, and in doing so, conducts a particular kind of theology that adds to religious discourse and discussion. Art historian James D. Herbert comes from a different perspective and is among several scholars of the discipline looking at the relation of theology and art, specifically addressing a 'theology of art' that he considers 'similar to what we have grown accustomed to speaking of as the social history of art... works of art may throw light on particular theological debates, and theological issues may draw attention to aspects of the art not otherwise noticeable.'²⁸ Seeing art as 'icon', he argues that an artistic work is not an 'essence' but instead 'presents a relation', much as Quash sees in his examples the receptive relation of artist, artwork, and Holy Spirit.²⁹

These networks of theological and artistic relationality, and the theological and art historical perspectives respectively, present useful models for my particular study. However, this dissertation, analyzing the 'theology of art' in the work of Burne-Jones, is not itself theological but distinctly art historical. Nevertheless, this does not make the 'theology of art', from my art historical perspective, strictly a 'social history', in which art and theology reflect

²⁶ Quash, *Found Theology*, 93-4.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 4-6.

²⁸ Herbert, *Our Distance from God*, 7.

²⁹ *Ibid*.

one another in the manner of debate or dialogue. Therefore, while not theological itself, this dissertation engages directly with the theological discipline. Using art historical and theological methodological and historical tools, I emphasise the creative process of artistic making as it interplays with theological notions particular to Burne-Jones and the potentials those notions present when deployed in visual, material form. In this case, Burne-Jones's 'theology of art' is traced back, compared to, and can be expanded from his early theological inspirations and mentors – particularly, John Henry Newman, who Burne-Jones reflects on in later life and is the touchstone for theological thinking here. Newman's ideas on Christian history and tradition, the incarnation of Christ, an incarnational approach to the sacraments and ritual of the church, and the Virgin Mary are several points of theology that will be argued Burne-Jones's art engages and expands upon not didactically and reflectively but creatively and innovatively as a theology of its own in visual media. As to be discussed further in subsequent chapters, Newman was a controversial figure in his time. Even as Burne-Jones came to study and admire him, Newman and his theological perspective had shifted from a contentious form of Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism. To analyse Newman, Burne-Jones, and the potential for a 'theology of art', this method employs not only the historical theology of the debates surrounding Newman and Tractarianism more broadly, but also theological historiographical and philosophical tools of more contemporary thinkers on Newman, Tractarianism, and the issues they debated, such as tradition and the sacraments.³⁰

³⁰ Especially in relation to the theme of tradition, sacraments, and the nineteenth century church, authors and sources include but are not limited to: Ian Ker, *John Henry Newman* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Peter B. Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context: Anglican High Churchmanship 1760-1857* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); George Herring, *The Oxford Movement in Practice: The Tractarian Parochial World from the 1830s to the 1870s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Frances Knight, *The Church in the Nineteenth Century* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008); Elisabeth Jay, *Faith and Doubt in Victorian Britain* (London: Macmillan, 1986); Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* vol. 5 (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989); Owen Chadwick, *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement: Tractarian Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Chadwick, *The Victorian Church* 2 vol. 3rd ed. (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1987); Daniel Inman, *The Making of Modern English Theology: God and the Academy at Oxford, 1833-1945* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014); Peter Hichliff, *God and History: Aspects of British Theology 1875-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

These theological perspectives are incorporated into distinctly art historical theories, especially as they relate to the main theme that is proposed to be central to Burne-Jones's art: 'love between worlds'. I argue that it is this idea, artistic and theological, which unites Burne-Jones's religious and non-religious works as the themes Burne-Jones selects and very act of his artistic making strives to suggest what are theological ideas about the relationship between real and ideal – heaven and earth – and the potential for a certain theological concept and theme of love to have the possibility to bridge those worlds. While 'love between worlds' will be introduced and discussed further below and in chapters to follow, it is important to note here for the identification of a specific kind of theology Burne-Jones could be conducting in his artistic project.

Much as in the corresponding literature on 'theology and art', or 'theological approaches to art',³¹ ideas such as transformation, engagement, participation, and imagination remain significant concepts to consider here in the 'theology of art' and the particular concept of 'love between worlds'. However, I will specifically be engaging with these terms as they relate to the artistic process – to design, making, and activity. Therefore, this 'theology of art' underlines certain physical realities of artistic making and creative intellection, and could relate to recent theories of materiality and sensation in religious cultural studies.³² My methodology refers to particular theories about the phenomenological act of drawing and design, of the intellect enacting an ideal on the page through the hand, and the process to the final product through various mediums and actions of drafting.³³ I argue that this is important

³¹ Roger Hazelton, *A Theological Approach to Art* (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1976).

³² Sally Promey, ed., *Sensational Religion: Sensory Cultures in Material Practice* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

³³ Jean Luc-Nancy, *The Pleasure in Drawing*, trans. Philip Armstrong (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013); David Rosand, *Drawing Acts: Studies in Graphic Expressions and Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Rosand, 'Remembered Lines,' in *Memory and Oblivion: Proceedings of the XXXIXth International Congress of the History of Art held in Amsterdam, 1-7 September 1996* eds. Wessel Reinink and Jeroen Stumpl (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999); Susan Lambert, *Drawing: Technique and Purpose* (London: Trefoil Books Ltd., 1984); Françoise Viatte, ed., *Repentirs* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1991).

not simply for understanding the psychological and phenomenological action of creation, but for discovering how art expresses and explores theological ideas. These theories are useful in Burne-Jones's context as he works through subjects and compositions not only in his extensive drawings, sketches, and designs but also as he repeatedly returns to and develops the same theme or subject in different media and contexts years later. Choosing scenes, changing compositional frameworks, and pointing back to a similar theme, in Burne-Jones and other artists, allows us opportunities to question how art can make a specific theological idea present visually. For instance, why in various sketches for *The Merciful Knight* (1863) would Burne-Jones change, over and over again in his sketches, where the knight stands in relation to the animated crucifix (Figure 14)? Some may argue it was simply an aesthetic choice. However, as comparison between the sketches and final work unfold, we may take into consideration the personal context of Burne-Jones in his early career as an artist and his intellectual background, and particular theological connotations may be seen implicitly manifest in each seemingly minute decision to re-structure the image (Figures 16-21). In this I follow philosopher Georges Didi-Huberman in his analysis of Fra Angelico.³⁴ Didi-Huberman does not simply study Fra Angelico but provides a model for how the very material of art may be encountered theologically. Directly reading the infused theology in the very matter of the work, Didi-Huberman speaks of the Renaissance conceptions of figuration as they are tied to distance and divine relationships between heaven and earth and the consequent seeming dis-figurations and abstractions within the representations of religious scenes that Fra Angelico paints. For an artist of the Renaissance – or for our perceptions of religious art generally - Fra Angelico may seem to be painting in a highly subversive way. However, Didi-Huberman shows these innovations to be philosophically theological

³⁴ Georges Didi-Huberman, *Fra Angelico: Dissemblance and Figuration*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

conceptions tied to the Christian discourse. Even what appear to be random, previously unnoticed splashes of paint work toward making visible the discourse of theology, the realm of the invisible divine. Thus, Didi-Huberman's work is important for my thesis especially in his articulation of how art *itself* articulates theologically metaphysical notions. In my 'theology of art', I argue it is necessary to delve into these ideas about draftsmanship alongside an investigation into specific historical contexts to retrieve the power of these images and what they are trying to say – in wordless image – about the wordless eternal.³⁵ How this plays out and what kind of theology Burne-Jones could be developing in his 'theology of art' in the specific example of *The Merciful Knight* is discussed in Chapter 3 – what it serves to show here is the sample of mixed methodological tools related to artistic making and theology that are useful for discovering a 'theology of art'. As a main theme, 'love between worlds' will engage with these ideas as he works out that theology in changed and remade pictures and designs.

Thus, it is an emphasis on art that I wish to draw out – art itself as an articulation and generator of theological concepts, and the artistic medium as a tool for a theologian who works not with textual but visual media. I believe Burne-Jones's art is pertinent for this kind of analysis, not only due to his previous background in theological study but also because he specifically chose art, rather than theology and text, most often (if not always) to construct metaphysical propositions about beauty and existence. In this he is like most artists, who avoid verbal explanation and instead make their expression in the medium of their choice.

³⁵ Philosophers of religion and the arts are useful here, especially Jacques Maritain (*Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry: The A.W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts* [New York: Meridian Books, 1955]; Maritain, *Georges Rouault* [New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1954]). More recent thinkers include Douglas Hedley, in *The Iconic Imagination* (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2016), and the Dominican theologian, Aiden Nichols, O.P., whose work on the incarnation and art is particularly salient as we consider the history of art alongside biblical theological precedent (especially *The Art of God Incarnate: Theology and Symbol from Genesis to the Twentieth Century* [New York and Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1980]). These texts are important models as we consider the idea of the *Imago dei* (image of God) as it works in the visual arts (Hedley, *The Iconic Imagination*, 31).

Because of this, the ‘theology of art’ could possibly be used for other artists and contexts, especially where the action of art itself, as a process of making, is theological in nature.

The Current Stance

Burne-Jones is mainly known through the work of his wife Georgiana.³⁶ After his death in 1898, she worked feverishly to collect the letters from his friends, call up memories from companions and patrons, and write the two-volume biography that would be published in 1905. The *Memorials* is a complex document upon which any scholar of Burne-Jones is heavily reliant, with its quotations from her memory, lengthy reproduction of letters and account book entries, and personal descriptions of times, events, and places they shared during their married life. It is consequently rose-tinted, leaving aside Burne-Jones’s infamous affair with the model and sculptress Maria Zambaco, as well as other romantic friendships he had shared with young women later in his life. However, for the purposes of this dissertation, it is a vital source that includes Georgiana’s discussion of Burne-Jones’s early life and memories in Birmingham and Oxford, as well as reproduction of letters and conversations on theological themes and ideas from his earliest days of religious interest to his later years approaching death. Though we must remember that many of these are explicitly edited or implicitly changed by Georgiana’s personal choice and preference, the quotations and information itself remains significant for beginning our understanding of the importance of theology in Burne-Jones’s life.

In scholarship, it was John Christian in the 1970s who helped to reintroduce the artist to the twentieth century art world.³⁷ Christian was responsible for curating exhibitions and

³⁶ Georgiana Burne-Jones, *The Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones* 2 vols. (London: Chiswick Press, 1905). All further citations from this work will be from this edition and made with the shortened format *Memorials* followed by volume and page number.

³⁷ John Christian, ‘Burne-Jones Studies,’ *Burlington Magazine* 115 (February 1973): 92-109; Christian, ‘Burne-Jones’s Second Italian Journey,’ *Apollo* n.s., 102 (November 1975): 334-37; Christian, ‘Early German Sources for Pre-Raphaelite Designs,’ *Art Quarterly* 36, nos. 1 2 (1973): 56-83; Christian, ‘Edward Burne-Jones: An

identifying and notating works for exhibitions and public auction. The Arts Council retrospective in 1975 was curated by Christian, with an accompanying catalogue: *Burne-Jones: The Paintings, Graphic, and Decorative Work of Sir Edward Burne-Jones, 1833-98*.³⁸ An exhibition of 1997 at the Tate Gallery also presented the influence of Burne-Jones within the context of British Aestheticism and Symbolism.³⁹ On the centenary of his death, the Metropolitan Museum of Art celebrated Burne-Jones's work with a comprehensive show that afterwards travelled to the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and the Musée d'Orsay. Although there is currently no complete catalogue raisonné of Burne-Jones's work,⁴⁰ a main point of reference is Christian and Stephen Wildman's catalogue, *Edward Burne-Jones: Victorian-Artist Dreamer*, which accompanied this 1998 centenary exhibition of Burne-Jones's work.⁴¹ Popular biographies by Penelope Fitzgerald (1975) and Fiona MacCarthy (2011) have also made Burne-Jones's life available to a broader audience.⁴²

There are many studies examining different aspects of Burne-Jones's career.⁴³

Nevertheless, generally scholarship has and continues to gloss over, avoid, or even explicitly

Address Given at the Service of Commemoration in Birmingham Cathedral, 19th June 1998,' *Review of the Pre-Raphaelite Society* 6, nos. 2-3 (1998): 2-5; Christian, *The Pre-Raphaelites in Oxford* (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 1974); Christian, "'A Serious Talk': Ruskin's Place in Burne-Jones's Artistic Development,' *Pre-Raphaelite Papers* (London: Tate Gallery, 1984); Christian, 'William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones and Illuminated Manuscripts,' *Important British Art* (London: Christie, Manson, and Woods, 2002); John Christian, Elisa Korb, and Tessa Sidey, *Hidden Burne-Jones: Works on Paper by Edward Burne-Jones from Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery* (London: D Giles Ltd, 2007).

³⁸ Arts Council of Great Britain, *Burne-Jones: The Paintings, Graphic, and Decorative Work of Sir Edward Burne-Jones, 1833-98* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1975).

³⁹ Andrew Wilton and Robert Upstone, eds., *The Age of Rossetti, Burne-Jones and Watts: Symbolism in Britain, 1860-1910* (London: Tate Publishing, 1997).

⁴⁰ Peter Nahum et al. have begun an online catalogue raisonné, which is at about '25%' complete. *Burne-Jones: Catalogue Raisonné*, accessed 24 October 2020, <https://www.eb-j.org/page/Introduction&Guide>.

⁴¹ John Christian and Stephen Wildman, *Edward Burne-Jones: Victorian Artist-Dreamer* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998).

⁴² Penelope Fitzgerald, *Edward Burne-Jones* (Phoenix Mill: Sutton Publishing, 1997); Fiona MacCarthy, *The Last Pre-Raphaelite: Edward Burne-Jones and the Victorian Imagination* (London: Faber and Faber, 2011).

⁴³ Following catalogues and the pioneering work done by John Christian, other studies isolated various elements of Burne-Jones's career. Often, he is examined alongside best friend and colleague, William Morris, as in Caroline Arscott's *William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones: Interlacings* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008). This book's interest is in the theories around science and technology that could have influenced the pair and their collaboration. Other authors more singularly look at Burne-Jones, as in Russell

reject the influence of theology on Burne-Jones's art. In *Edward Burne-Jones: Victorian Artist-Dreamer*, Stephen Wildman and John Christian present the standard view on Burne-Jones and religion.⁴⁴ The catalogue recounts line-by-line the highlights of Burne-Jones's childhood events related to religious thought, an overview of that aspect of his development.⁴⁵ Their main interest in his time at Oxford is his meeting of Morris and their literary readings and adventures. They then make the assessment that now most scholarship follows, claiming 'Burne-Jones's religious convictions were no doubt sincere enough, but ultimately he had embraced Tractarianism *for secondary reasons*' [emphasis added].⁴⁶ This they further use to justify Burne-Jones's interest in Charles Kingsley, Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, and others who do not line up with or even oppose Tractarian thought.

Ash's *Sir Edward Burne-Jones*. (London: Pavilion Books Limited, 1993), Debra Mancoff's *Burne-Jones* (San Francisco: Pomegranate, 1998), or David Peter's Corbett's *Edward Burne-Jones* (London: Tate Publishing, 2004). Corbett is interested in Burne-Jones's ability to investigate the material differences between word and image, which he further explores in his larger book *The World in Paint: Modern Art and Visuality in England, 1848-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004). Here he is one of a selection of artists from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and is most specifically paired with his mentor, Rossetti. Many scholars isolate particular influences or pieces of his works. Liana de Girolami Cheney, in *Edward Burne-Jones' Mythical Paintings: The Pygmalion of the PreRaphaelite Painters* (New York and Washington D.C.: Peter Lang, 2014), looks at his mythical paintings; in her articles, she analyses specific series or figures, as in 'Edward Burne-Jones' "Andromeda": Transformation of Historical and Mythological Sources,' *Artibus et Historiae* 25, no. 49 (2004): 197-227. Medievalism or his interest in certain authors, like Chaucer, have been explored by Colin Cruise, in his article, "'Sick-sad dreams": Burne-Jones and the Pre-Raphaelite Medievalism,' *The Yearbook of English Studies* 40, no. ½ (2010): 121-140, and Velma Bourgeois Richmond, 'Edward Burne-Jones's Chaucer Portraits in the Kelmscott "Chaucer,"' *The Chaucer Review* 40, no. 1 (2005): 1-38. This interest in his influences or particular subjects or series is also represented in the investigations of doctoral dissertations, such as John Franklin Martin's 'Sir Edward Burne-Jones's The Legend of St George and the Dragon: A Neoplatonic Quest,' (PhD dissertation, University of Louisville, 1997), and Dorothy Mercer's 'The Days of Creation and Other Hexaemeral Cycles by Edward Burne-Jones,' (PhD dissertation, University of Georgia, 1989). The twenty-first century's interest in themes and questions of gender has also garnered gendered readings of Burne-Jones's work, such as Beverly Ann Joyce's "'Sighing after the Infinite": Masculinity, Androgyny and Femininity in the Art of Edward Burne-Jones,' (PhD dissertation, University of Kansas, 2003). An interest in his materials and working methods is reflected in the scholarship of Fiona Mann, 'A "born rebel": Edward Burne-Jones and watercolour painting 1857-80,' *Burlington Magazine* 156, no. 1339 (2014): 657-664. A discussion of many of the major scholars of the Pre-Raphaelite Movement, who have examined Burne-Jones in singular works, chapters, or articles, follows, particularly regarding their attitude to his religious background and influences.

⁴⁴ John Christian and Stephen Wildman, *Edward Burne-Jones: Victorian Artist-Dreamer* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998).

⁴⁵ Christian and Wildman, *Edward Burne-Jones*, 43.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 45.

We can see that this train of thought is generally followed in much contemporary and subsequent reception and writing on Burne-Jones. In a popular book published in 1998 exactly 100 years after Burne-Jones's death, Christopher Wood characterises Burne-Jones as 'an absolutely typical mid-Victorian – intensely serious, very earnest, very high-minded; *a moralist who lost his religious faith*, but wanted to leave the world a better place than he found it... Like many Victorian artists and writers, Burne-Jones's life was shaped by three forces – religion, literature and history [emphasis added]'.⁴⁷ How Wood continues to speak of these influences is interesting, especially as he moves forward with his analysis of Burne-Jones's life and art. He claims that 'Burne-Jones's imagination was shaped, above all, by literature... But if his art was inspired by literature, his character was informed by religion'. Thus, Wood recognises that Burne-Jones had a kind of 'missionary fervour' about him as he 'transmuted his religious ideals into artistic ones' and it was his deep desire to make 'the world a better place' with beauty that differentiated him from the Aesthetic Movement's values of 'art for art's sake'.⁴⁸ However, it is this distinction between 'imagination' and 'character' that leads Wood to value the former and its associations with literature more highly than the latter, taking time in the subsequent chapters to explain Burne-Jones's literary readings at Oxford rather than the deeper details of his religious education. At the end of his chapter on Burne-Jones's childhood, Wood quotes Burne-Jones's mysterious words about God from a 'Samoan chief', originally quoted by Georgiana in the *Memorials*: 'we know that at night someone goes by among the trees, but we never speak of it.'⁴⁹ Burne-Jones said this in answer to questions about his religious belief, and this quotation, for Wood and for others, becomes a convenient way to not ask questions or talk further about the religious influences

⁴⁷ Christopher Wood, *Burne-Jones: The Life and Works of Sir Edward Burne-Jones* (New York: Stewart, Tabori and Chang, 1998), 6.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Wood, *Burne-Jones*, 9; *Memorials*, 1:53.

that formed Burne-Jones's 'character'. If we instead understand Burne-Jones's religious formation in the mystery of the sacramental life and ancient church history and philosophy, this quotation does not sit so easily as a dismissal of all religious principles for the merely spiritual. Burne-Jones, by slyly avoiding further questions about his religious affiliation, arguably underlines the theology of *mystery* that runs through his thinking and artistic project.

This sort of approach does not usually lead to an analysis that could connect Burne-Jones's religious education and his artistic vision. In Martin Harrison and William Waters's *Burne-Jones* of 1979, Burne-Jones is described as someone who has 'stumbled upon a method of visual metaphor and used it in a profound and integrated way'.⁵⁰ Though describing accurately Burne-Jones's push towards abstract ideals, they account for it as a 'stumble', as if it were an accident that Burne-Jones was designing 'paintings which had greater universality' and made an impact on 'the mainstream of European cultural development'.⁵¹ While Harrison and Waters's first chapter describes briefly the 'sacramental mysteries of the Mass' and how 'Mysticism of this type was calculated to fire the young artist', Harrison and Waters do not delve more deeply into what the words 'sacramental', 'mysteries', 'Mass', and 'mysticism' would mean for Burne-Jones.⁵² David Cecil, in his 1969 book *Visionary and Dreamer* on Samuel Palmer (the Visionary) and Burne-Jones (the Dreamer), outright scorns the potential for any deeper interpretation of Burne-Jones's religious principles: 'Though he called himself a Christian, the central crucial doctrine of Christianity did not mean much to him. Unlike Palmer, he never speaks of the Fall or the

⁵⁰ Martin Harrison and William Waters, *Burne-Jones* (London: Barrie & Jenkins Ltd., 1973), xiii.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Harrison and Waters, *Burne-Jones*, 6.

Atonement; and he had no special sentiment for the person of Christ.⁵³ As the archival research presented in this thesis will show, this is quite wrong.

Thus, while some scholars recognise that Burne-Jones took initial inspiration from Newman and the Oxford Movement, others avoid or simply do not follow up the observation. Two recent papers on Burne-Jones's *Briar Rose* series serve as further examples of this aversion to Burne-Jones's theological underpinnings and influence. In her article of 2009, Andrea Wolk Rager quotes John Ruskin's lecture on *The Art of England* (1884) when he discusses Burne-Jones as leader of the 'mythic school':

According to John Ruskin, Burne-Jones was a painter of the mythic school, in possession of a command "over the entire range of both Northern and Greek mythology" and capable of synthesizing these various legends into harmonic unity, ennobling his art through the symbolical expressions of timeless truths.⁵⁴

However, this incomplete quoting of Ruskin's words has lost what he is actually arguing about Burne-Jones. Compare Rager's reconstruction of Ruskin to the fuller text of Ruskin's lecture:

It should be ground of just pride to all of us here in Oxford, that out of this University came the painter whose *indefatigable scholarship* and exhaustless fancy have together fitted him for this task [of mythic painting], in a degree far distinguishing him above all contemporary European designers. It is impossible for the general public to estimate the quantity of careful and investigatory reading, and the fine tact of literary discrimination, which are signified by the command now possessed by Mr. Burne-Jones over the entire range both of Northern and Greek mythology, or the tenderness at once, and largeness, of *sympathy which have enabled him to harmonize*

⁵³ David Cecil, *Visionary and Dreamer: Two Poetic Painters, Samuel Palmer and Edward Burne-Jones* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 185.

⁵⁴ Andrea Wolk Rager, "'Smite this Sleeping World Awake': Edward Burne-Jones and *The Legend of the Briar Rose*," *Victorian Studies* 51 no. 3, Special Issue: Papers and Responses from the Sixth Annual Conference of the North American Victorian Studies Association (Spring 2009): 444.

these with the loveliest traditions of Christian legend [emphasis added].⁵⁵

Indeed, in giving the reader the impression that Ruskin saw in Burne-Jones some magical ability to tune all his works into one musical, aesthetic harmony, Rager misses a deeper truth about Ruskin's view of Burne-Jones's scholarly, intellectual approach, that, above all, is tied to the 'loveliest traditions of the Christian legend.' This changes the whole meaning of what Rager is trying to refer to and argue here, as she explicitly avoids the complications that might come from *The Briar Rose*, and other 'mythic works', having to be harmonized with Christian thought and practice.

In another paper on *The Briar Rose*, published Summer 2012 in *English: Journal of the English Association*, Cristina Pascu-Tulbure gives 'new context' to the series by considering Burne-Jones's relationship to Ruskin.⁵⁶ Interestingly, there again is an unbalanced outlook on this relationship between Burne-Jones and Ruskin. While Rager could be misconstruing Ruskin's idea, here Pascu-Tulbure somewhat misinterprets some issues at the heart of the difference and similarity between Burne-Jones's and Ruskin's thoughts:

Burne-Jones's departure from Ruskin's teaching and his occasional defiance are doubled by an unusual attraction between these two very different men, united by their understanding of creativity. Ruskin was concerned with historic and cultural cycles; he preached – and hoped mankind would take notice – on the beauty of goodness and natural truth, and the value of morality. *Burne-Jones thought on a lesser scale, indulging his atemporal visions* and aiming for jewel-like beauty [emphasis added].⁵⁷

This idea that Burne-Jones thought on a 'lesser scale, indulging his atemporal visions' disregards what Ruskin says about Burne-Jones in 1884, his 'indefatigable scholarship' and ability to connect all that he does with the 'Christian legend'. Further, this statement is made

⁵⁵ John Ruskin, *The Art of England: Lectures Given in Oxford* (London and Aylesbury: Hazell, Watson, and Viney Ltd, 1884), 40.

⁵⁶ Cristina Pascu-Tulbure, 'Burne-Jones's *Briar Rose*: New Context,' *English Journal of the English Association* 6, no. 233 (Summer 2012): 151-175.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

without historical or biographical consideration for Burne-Jones's intense 'historic and cultural' theological studies on the very 'beauty of goodness and natural truth, and the value of morality' that inspired his turn to art. Indeed, Ruskin's and Burne-Jones's ideas of how to achieve that 'beauty of goodness and natural truth, and the value of morality' were informed by different theological perspectives and they approached the issues from their own specific theological worldviews. Pascu-Tulbure goes on to say:

Like Ruskin, he believed in the artist's calling to serve humanity; but, unlike him, Burne-Jones primarily sought to show the world beauty, of which he conceived as the gateway to divinity. Although his visions are often illogical and mysterious, and rooted in his own imagination, unlike Ruskin's, who saw art as divine inspiration, Burne-Jones inhabits them with the same ease and conviction as if they had been real... whereas Ruskin appreciated most in an image its organic nature, reflecting life itself, Burne-Jones was more concerned with the idea of beauty and its particular manifestations.⁵⁸

While some of these claims start to hit on certain elements at play in each man's worldview, this analysis does not consider concrete, historical terms. For instance, these scholars do not look at the formative studies of Burne-Jones, who considered these very issues. Indeed, these topics were historically, intellectually, and culturally framed by a whole host of complex events and ideas that moulded Burne-Jones's adult life.

Each scholar above presents a new vantage on Burne-Jones's *Briar Rose* series and his relationship with John Ruskin. However, the selective quotation and interpretation of certain passages and concepts leads to a gap in the presentation of the deep mystery of the work and the fruitful, though complicated, relation of Burne-Jones and Ruskin. This type of analysis, avoiding some of the underpinning theological and historical positions, stems out of prior research that dismisses, downplays, or rejects those contexts.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

However, there are a few scholars who have begun to question these ideas. Christofer Conrad's chapters in *Edward Burne-Jones: The Earthly Paradise* take a more positive view and begin to think about Burne-Jones's religiosity. 'All his life Burne-Jones considered Newman's teaching as fundamental moral armour...What eventually became artistic activity in Burne-Jones only derived from an urgent need to find answers to burning social and moral questions of his day.'⁵⁹ This is true, but Conrad does not spend any more time specifying the details of either Newman's teachings or the social and moral questions. He instead jumps immediately to speak of the theme of 'pilgrimage' in works such as *St. George and the Dragon*, *The Briar Rose*, *Cupid and Psyche* and *Pygmalion*.⁶⁰ Conrad is beginning to make a clear connection that much previous scholarship has overlooked. However, since Conrad speaks only vaguely about theology and the actual 'teachings' and 'questions', his interpretation cannot be extended and seen for its fullest potential. In his second chapter on the Holy Grail and other religious themes, Conrad asks, 'Was Burne-Jones a religious man? His answers to questions about his beliefs were always evasive [such as the 'Samoaan' quote]...His emphatic reserve with regard to his own faith may have to do with his desire to forestall any simplistic interpretation of his religious pictures as either mere illustrations or confessional works.'⁶¹ Again, this is a logical conclusion, but can and needs to be more fully supported and explained with increased archival research and further understanding of Burne-Jones's theological studies.

Richard Dorment's dissertation of 1976 explored the intertwined implications of liturgy and doctrine, architecture and art in Burne-Jones's scheme for St. Paul's-Within-the-

⁵⁹ Christofer Conrad and Annabel Zettel, *Edward Burne-Jones: The Earthly Paradise* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2009), 16-17.

⁶⁰ Conrad, *Earthly Paradise*, 18-19.

⁶¹ Conrad, 'The Quest for the Sangraal and Religious Themes,' 157.

Walls, the American Church in Rome.⁶² In 2000, Kathy M. Bullough wrote an article that discussed the connection between the ‘Second Eve’ in Newman’s theology and Burne-Jones’s *Annunciation* paintings.⁶³ These are significant steps – connecting specific theology to unique developments in Burne-Jones’s art. However, Dorment and Bullough do not take further steps to relate either the themes they discussed or the particular theological view that underwrites his wider artistic approach. What is missing here is the wider ranging implications of his artistic method, rather than a few outlying examples. In the catalogue of the recent Tate Britain exhibition, Elizabeth Prettejohn speaks of this in her essay, ‘Burne-Jones: Intellectual, Designer, and People’s Man’.⁶⁴ Prettejohn recognises Burne-Jones’s unique intellectual formation, proposing that it ‘gave him an analytical habit that is crucial to understanding his art.’⁶⁵ This important acknowledgment of his scholarly attitude can be explored in further study of his theological background and the theological nature of his art.

The most comprehensive study of Burne-Jones’s religious background to date is Colette Crossman’s doctoral dissertation of 2007, *Art as Lived Religion: Edward Burne-Jones as Painter, Priest, Pilgrim, and Monk*.⁶⁶ She recognizes that Burne-Jones does not fall easily into a denomination or adhere specifically to the labels of particular religious institutions, and yet the intensity of his religious attitude and outlook remains evident. This leads her to an expansive analysis of his background and artwork, on the one hand using methodologies of ‘lived religion’ to discuss the religiosity of Burne-Jones’s art practice, and

⁶² Richard Dorment, ‘Burne-Jones and the Decoration of St. Paul’s American Church, Rome’ (PhD dissertation, Columbia Univ., 1976).

⁶³ Kathy M. Bullough, ‘Serpents, Angels and Virgins: The Virgin Mary as the “Second Eve” in the Art of Edward Burne-Jones,’ *Religion and Arts* 4, no. 4 (2000): 463-490. Bullough’s work will be important for connections made here in Chapter 4 and 5.

⁶⁴ Elizabeth Prettejohn, ‘Burne-Jones: Intellectual, Designer, People’s Man,’ in *Edward Burne-Jones*, ed. Alison Smith (London: Tate Publishing, 2018), 13-21.

⁶⁵ Prettejohn, ‘Burne-Jones: Intellectual, Designer, People’s Man,’ 16.

⁶⁶ Colette M. Crossman, ‘Art as Lived Religion: Edward Burne-Jones as Painter, Priest, Pilgrim and Monk’ (PhD dissertation, College Park: University of Maryland, 2007).

on the other, reconstructing how viewers would have seen and used Burne-Jones's art pieces in ritual context. In the first chapter, she presents a wide-ranging summation of Burne-Jones's early religious encounters. This she investigates under the idea 'The Artist as Priest,' with subsequent chapters about Burne-Jones's altarpieces, reception of Burne-Jones as a religious painter and the 'sanctification of the secular', and Burne-Jones as monk and pilgrim.⁶⁷ Her methodological model is influenced by scholars of American religions, such as David D. Hall and Colleen McDannell, who have developed the notion of 'lived religion' that Crossman employs. 'Influenced by ethnography, ritual studies, and cultural anthropology,' Crossman explains, 'their mode of inquiry takes considerations of religion beyond solely its institutional manifestation to also examine how doctrine is transformed and adapted through everyday life.'⁶⁸ This approach brings Crossman into contact with Burne-Jones's encounters and his own original writings. Her recognition that 'a major flaw in the existing literature is a tendency to base conclusions on the nature of Burne-Jones's beliefs, or lack thereof, on one or two isolated quotes lifted from the same few published sources' is completely correct.⁶⁹

Crossman presents much new and original data, and supports her claim that Burne-Jones indeed was a religious painter, with his own religious views even after his departure from Oxford in 1856. However, I argue that her proposition does not go far enough. While her anthropological approach brings to light new materials that influenced Burne-Jones and shaped the reception of his work, this method does not grapple with the intellectually theological implications of Burne-Jones's formation and approach in art. In her initial chapter, for example, Crossman discusses Burne-Jones's 'extracurricular religious encounters'.⁷⁰ What follows is a very useful summary of some readings and quotations about

⁶⁷ Crossman, 'Art as Lived Religion,' 44-132;145;221;292;364.

⁶⁸ Crossman, 'Art as Lived Religion,' 31-32.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 30-31.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 79.

Burne-Jones's time at Oxford.⁷¹ Developing the theme of 'lived religion', Crossman goes on to examine the 'sanctification of the secular' in the reception and evocation of 'Christian impressions' in works like *The Golden Stairs* and *Le Chant d'Amour* by nineteenth century writers and critics.⁷² This is very interesting, highly relevant work, especially for making the case that Burne-Jones *and* the broader artistic sphere did not distinguish the sacred from the secular. However, more research and thinking can and should be done on Burne-Jones's specific relation to the theology that inspired him, and how his art went beyond the embodiment of his own personal 'artist-monk' devotional practice and instead developed major theological principles.

Thus, the current state of the literature leaves open some questions regarding Burne-Jones's theological education and its relation to his artistic practice. There is a need to go beyond initial connections to learn what it meant for Burne-Jones to study and know theology in his time and place and begin thinking about how his art may have some of those theological themes or methods within it. Doing so may open avenues for examining how Burne-Jones did not simply 'stumble' upon a 'universal language' and innovative 'visual metaphor'.⁷³ Rather, we may begin to question how he crafted these out of a deep well of theological formation that could present us fertile grounds for a 'theology of art'.

The Tractarians: Key Concepts

This dissertation relies heavily on primary historical documents of theology encountered by Burne-Jones in his formative years as a devotee of the Tractarian Movement. Understanding their metaphysical and philosophical arguments, much as Burne-Jones sought to, will be significant for unravelling a potential 'theology of art' in Burne-Jones's works.

⁷¹ Ibid, 79-84.

⁷² Ibid, 280.

⁷³ Harrison and Waters, *Burne-Jones*, xiii.

Methodologically, we must situate the Oxford Movement within its historical and contemporary context, especially as we consider how Burne-Jones encounters and develops Tractarian theological notions in his mind and work. Situated in Anglican debates about the historicity of the English Church following the Reformation, Tractarians neither rest easily in the category of ‘High Churchmanship’ of the eighteenth century nor in the ‘Ritualist’ movement that was to follow them in the 1850s and 60s.⁷⁴ In contest with the growth of secularity and dissent within society, the founders of the movement sought to affirm the church as a supernatural institution that safeguarded the sacraments, theology, hierarchy, and liturgy handed down through the apostolic succession.⁷⁵ In this thesis, I examine the complex *incarnational* and *sacramental* theology of the controversial group, particularly in the writings of Burne-Jones’s initial inspiration, John Henry Newman. In doing so, I refer to biographic points in Newman’s life and theology as well as Burne-Jones’s,⁷⁶ and reflect upon the historiography of the movement, especially as it relates to broader histories of the Christian Church in the nineteenth century, religious and political influences within Anglicanism, and changes within the academic and parochial life of mid-nineteenth century England.⁷⁷ This will be articulated further and expanded upon in Chapter 1, where the focus shall be on explaining the setting of nineteenth century Anglicanism, specific themes within the Oxford Movement, and the events of Burne-Jones’s early theological education.

⁷⁴ Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context*, 10; 25; 29; George Herring, *The Oxford Movement in Practice: The Tractarian Parochial World from the 1830s to the 1870s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 27; 61; 63.

⁷⁵ Knight, *The Church in the Nineteenth Century*, 15; Elisabeth Jay, *Faith and Doubt in Victorian Britain* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 24-25.

⁷⁶ With particular reference to Ian Ker’s seminal biography of Newman (*John Henry Newman: A Biography* 2nd ed. [Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009]).

⁷⁷ Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context*, 1-10; Herring, *The Oxford Movement in Practice*, 27; Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, vol. 5, 258-265; Owen Chadwick, *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement: Tractarian Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Chadwick, *The Victorian Church* 2 vol. 3rd ed. (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1987); Daniel Inman, *The Making of Modern English Theology: God and the Academy at Oxford, 1833-1945* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014); Peter Hichliff, *God and History: Aspects of British Theology 1875-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 8.

Love Between Worlds

In this thesis, I argue that this is the theology with which Burne-Jones is directly engaged; it is complexly situated, historically and philosophically. Its interests are indeed in the metaphysical notion of the supernatural in the natural, and the present moment's connection not only to the development of the church, its doctrine, and practices but to a broader 'Salvation History' where the birth, death, and resurrection of God himself is the key to human understanding and existence.⁷⁸ It is this theology that emphasizes anew the relation between God and man, and the potential for union between heaven and earth, in the gift of the highest love in Christ's incarnation and sacrifice. Arguably, this is the *love between worlds* of heaven and earth which structures and gives potency to Burne-Jones's work, across his career, his themes, and media. *Love between worlds* is an idea which I argue encapsulates the theological concepts formative to Burne-Jones's early life *and* the questions Burne-Jones pursues in his art.

It is widely recognised that most of Burne-Jones's themes focus on love and romance – most specifically on the pursuit of a beloved, who is a vision of idealised female beauty.⁷⁹ However, his quite 'mysterious' narratives of love – often shown left unfulfilled or unrealised – open deeper questions about man's relation to beauty and the purpose and function of love and desire. I argue this relational, open-ended depiction of love has its strange power and potency in Burne-Jones because of the formation of *both* his intellect and imagination by the theology of the Oxford Movement.

Certainly, Burne-Jones was not alone – especially amongst the Pre-Raphaelites – in his exploration of themes related to separated lovers. He worked with Dante Gabriel Rossetti in his studio during the earliest days of his artistic training, and the two men shared an

⁷⁸ See Chapter 1, 'John Henry Newman'.

⁷⁹ William Waters, *Burne-Jones - A Quest for Love: Works by Sir Edward Burne-Jones Bt and Related Works by Contemporary Artists* (London: Peter Nahum, 1993).

intensity of feeling for the subject. This can be seen in the instance of ‘The Blessed Damozel’, a poem written and re-written by Rossetti that Burne-Jones selected as the subject of one his first commissions. I explore this example in Chapter 2, especially since it speaks to art’s ability to convey in theme and medium the inherently theological implications of love between worlds. The theological subjects introduced above, to be deepened in the following chapters, of sacrament and incarnation help to explain Burne-Jones’s lifelong attraction to the subject of the separation and pursuit of a lover insofar as Christ’s incarnation had been posited to him in Tractarian theology as the highest form of the mystery of love made real.⁸⁰ Therefore, Burne-Jones was given in his intellectual formation a conception of a metaphysical model of the union of heaven and earth, and its structure of mystery founded upon God made man in the incarnation. Thus, we shall begin to see that the inherent mysteriousness of Burne-Jones’s art could rest in his constant return to the underlying theological notions of love between worlds. The strange compositional separations; the serial unfolding of a Pilgrim’s, or a Prince’s, or Perseus’s pursuit of an unearthly beauty and its ultimate suspension of total union upon completion; and his unique use of media and the situational context of a church window or book illustration all posit the overarching mystery of the material expression of divine realities. In his art, the themes, composition, and media themselves are sensitive to and point towards this relation of heaven and earth, real and ideal, God and man. From the time Burne-Jones left university, he was perpetually creating. The sheer volume and variety of his works, in churches, homes, and galleries, in drawing, painting, and design, is overwhelming. His style changes and transmutes as he takes on new influences and ideas, and yet, his oeuvre is unified by his curiosity for and sense of mystery in every work. Burne-Jones subtly and masterfully imbued these theological ideas in religious

⁸⁰ This can be particularly focussed on in the theology of John Henry Newman, his main hero from the early period of Burne-Jones’s theological study. John Henry Newman, *Fifteen Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford Between A.D. 1826 and 1843* 3rd ed. (London, Oxford, and Cambridge: Rivingtons, 1872), 14-15; Ker, *John Henry Newman*, 258; See Chapter 1, ‘John Henry Newman’.

and non-religious projects as he tied each conception of beauty in art to principles that had been formative to his intellectual and creative framework. Love between worlds as a theme brings together many of these theological and artistic ideas, standing at the heart of Burne-Jones's particular 'theology of art'.

Structure

I have structured this thesis around key themes and ideas contextually situated in the theological debates of the period, the encounters and studies of Burne-Jones and his mentors, Burne-Jones's own words, and ultimately the artwork itself. In the chapters to follow, I will flesh out these notions as Burne-Jones encountered and engaged with them: first, as a teenager and student of theology, and then, as an artist developing his own theology in art. Chapter 1 lays the groundwork for the remaining chapters, presenting my archival research on Burne-Jones's initial encounters with theology – the people, places, and debates that drew him in and shaped him. This includes an examination of main theological points of John Henry Newman and E.B. Pusey, as well as investigations into little-known figures such as Charles Marriott, whom Burne-Jones encountered during his pivotal time at Oxford when he was deciding to leave his education for a career as an artist. Chapter 2 and 3 analyse his time of transition from theology to art through his initial artistic project. This includes, in each chapter, an analysis of *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* articles that have been little studied before. Here, we see him explicitly using the language of theology – of sacramentality in particular - to express artistic ideas. I argue for the potency of these ideas in his actual artistic practice early on by analysing early works, personal and commissioned, seeing the implications of his particular strain of theology at work.

The last chapters concern his mature and later years when these theological concepts develop through his language of artistic creation. In Chapter 4, Marian imagery is a point of reference at which to begin in this middle portion of his life. In the vast and varied

productions made at this point in his career, images of Mary appear in public works and private paintings. It is in the dialogue between private and public, exhibition and church commission, that we will investigate the deep artistic theology at work within his figural depictions of Mary and the expansive potentials of what I call an ‘Architecture of Annunciation.’ This will be followed by an extensive analysis of his *Cupid and Psyche* designs in Ruskin’s Teaching Collection. Looking at this vast project, and other paintings and projects that emerged from it, I argue that the ‘Architecture of Annunciation’ extends as a theological principle into non-religious, mythical works as well. This will follow upon Ruskin’s idea that Burne-Jones and his ‘indefatigable scholarship’ ‘harmonised’ all his work with the ‘loveliest’ of the ‘Christian legend’.⁸¹

Chapter 5 will conclude the thesis by referencing primary documents, such as an archival analysis of the manuscript of Thomas Rooke’s ‘studio conversations’, snippets of which have been collected and published by Mary Lago and quoted repeatedly in the art historical scholarship on Burne-Jones.⁸² A fuller analysis of the manuscript itself, existing copies of its handwritten original⁸³ and the typescript collected by Georgiana,⁸⁴ gives us deeper insight not only into his general practice and outlook but, for this thesis in particular, into the ingrained elements of his theologically artistic world-view. Other letters continue to emphasise his frequent return to the memories of his formative period, his time studying and formulating theological thoughts, and, consequently, the theological principles that are part of his artistic vision. These archival works supplement continued analysis of a selection of artworks from his later life, especially important religious commissions such as the *Morning*

⁸¹ Ruskin, *Art of England*, 40.

⁸² Mary Lago, ed., *Burne-Jones Talking: His Conversations 1895-1898 Preserved by his Studio Assistant Thomas Rooke* (London: John Murray, 1982).

⁸³ Thomas Matthew Rooke, ‘Notes of Thomas Matthews Rooke: Photo copy,’ mu:420800 Mary Lago Collection, University of Missouri Digital Library.

⁸⁴ Thomas Matthew Rooke, *Memoirs of Thomas Matthews Rooke: typescript: or Notes of conversations among the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, 1890-1899*. MSL/1988/7, Victoria and Albert Museum: National Art Archive.

of the Resurrection, which was first designed as an altarpiece and then recreated for gallery exhibition, and the mosaics for the American Church in Rome. The design for the *Tree of Life* for the latter project is particularly important, as Burne-Jones discusses the design in the Rooke manuscript, letters to critic Julia Cartwright, and letters cited by Georgiana in the *Memorials*. Further, it stands in complex relation to theology of the crucified Christ, which will be seen as it is compared to theological text (particularly in the sermons of Newman), mythical potential, artistic precedent, and Burne-Jones's own earlier words on and works of Christ. These later chapters will feature extended ekphrastic readings of the works, looking closely and considering the compositional content, the physical and contextual place of the work, and the process of the work itself through design and drafting.

The thesis will conclude with a final example, *The Prioress's Tale* painting, which was a late recreation of an early work of the same theme that he had painted on a cabinet made for William Morris's wedding and new house. Returning to this theme, I will make final connections between his late career and earliest artworks, his time of transition from theology to art, and the nature of his art as itself a 'theology of art'. By arguing that Burne-Jones painted theologically, my thesis explores how he expresses his ideas about the relation of God and man through the subjects around 'love between worlds' in the medium of art.

Chapter 1. ‘Things that will never be out of me’: Theological Formation

Edward Burne-Jones’s initial formation was in the theology of the controversial Tractarian Movement. In his early life he never thought to become an artist. Instead, he studied theology from adolescence until age twenty-three. Believing himself destined for the ministry, he pursued an education that began at King Edward’s Grammar School, where he was transferred from the vocational to the Classics department at fifteen, and then to Exeter College, University of Oxford in 1852. It was only after his high hopes for Oxford, as the initial home of the controversial Oxford (Tractarian) Movement, were dashed that he decided to become an artist. I argue that this background in the study of theology – and, particularly, that of John Henry Newman and the Tractarians – not only informs his decision to pursue an artistic career but also influences the ways he conceptualises, creates, and orients works within his artistic project. His intense studies and passion for Tractarian theology has subtle implications on his methods and modes of creation. This chapter will lay out features of his early theological background so that in later chapters we may tease out these implications as they relate to his artistic career. I will seek to define key terms and debates with which Burne-Jones was familiar and involved, particularly in relation to John Henry Newman. Where previous scholarship has simply alluded to the attraction of sacramental liturgies and ‘mysticism’, I specify what these experiences meant for Burne-Jones, in his youth and thereafter, in this and subsequent chapters.⁸⁵ Drawing on research conducted in archives containing the records, letters, and diaries of mentors and friends, this thesis will look at examples that will deepen the understanding of Burne-Jones’s intellectual formation.

⁸⁵ Harrison and Waters introduce the idea of ‘mysticism’ and liturgy influencing Burne-Jones, but do not specify what those terms could mean and how they could affect his art (*Burne-Jones*, xiii). See Introduction, ‘The Current Stance’.

Burne-Jones, The Oxford Movement, and Nineteenth Century Christianity

Two dominant historical narratives pervade the study of religion in the nineteenth century: growth and revival (particularly in evangelical missionary Christianity), and secularism and decline.⁸⁶ While these two scholarly perspectives seem diametrically opposed to one another, the two frameworks are important because they relate to the context of the many opposing strains of secular philosophy, politics, and religious thought and practice that shifted and changed considerably in post-Enlightenment Europe and imperial, industrial Victorian Britain particularly. ‘De-Christianization’, specifically in the intellectual established spheres of political and cultural life, spurred debate within and outside the institutional church of Anglicanism about the relevancy of the church, its community and worship.⁸⁷ Guided initially by Sir Robert Peel, church reforms in the 1830s and 1840s led to the explosion of church restoration and new builds – over 7,000 restored and about 7,000 constructed at a cost of more than 25,500,000 pounds between 1840 and 1876 alone.⁸⁸ Meanwhile, Dissenters and Nonconformists increased while many leaders and congregations within the Church of England were identifying more and more with a revival of ‘evangelical’ thought that confirmed, above all else, the validity of scripture over and against the ‘Romanish’ decadence of the Catholic tradition.⁸⁹

In this context, the Oxford Movement began in 1833, the year of Edward Burne-Jones’s birth. John Keble’s ‘Assize Sermon’ began the movement. This sermon, also called

⁸⁶ Knight, *The Church in the Nineteenth Century*, xvi; Jay, *Faith and Doubt in Victorian Britain*.

⁸⁷ Knight, *The Church in the Nineteenth Century*, xvii.

⁸⁸ James Bentley, *Ritualism and Politics in Victorian Britain: The Attempt to Legislate for Belief* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 4.

⁸⁹ According to Knight, the clergy that identified themselves as ‘Evangelical’ jumped from 500 at the beginning of the century to 6,500 (one third of the whole clergy) by the middle of the century. This prompted great change within the ‘internal religious culture’ of Anglicanism, ‘bringing about a Catholic revival within the national church’ (*The Church in the Nineteenth Century*, 14-15); ‘It has been estimated that at the time of the 1851 census, some 60 per cent of the English population regarded themselves as Anglicans, and perhaps 30 would have regarded themselves as Nonconformist. Four per cent were Roman Catholics’ (6).

‘The National Apostasy’, was preached from the University Church of St. Mary’s Oxford and reacted to the government’s interference with the Irish bishoprics in the Temporalities Act of 1833 – a political action by Parliament that threatened the balance of power between the church and state.⁹⁰ Later dubbed the ‘Tractarians’ after a series they published entitled *The Tracts for the Times*, the group consisted of relatively young theologians which included E.B. Pusey, John Keble, Isaac Williams, Hurrell Froude, and, most notably, John Henry Newman, the movement’s early leader and an inspiring force for Burne-Jones from the outset.⁹¹ This controversial group of theologians sought to re-establish the authority of the Anglican Church by looking back to the church’s roots in the early patristic period, confirming the validity of its sacraments and doctrines by arguing for the historical continuity of the doctrine and practice of the early church that had been handed on through apostolic succession.⁹² From their perspective, ‘the Church was a supernatural institution, with a spiritual mandate that could not be interfered with by political processes’.⁹³ While the spirit of revival could be seen uniting the ‘Anglo-Catholic’ Tractarians with more evangelical portions of Anglicanism and Dissent against secularity, the Oxford Movement’s sense of connection to ancient ‘catholic’ tradition and the sacraments would make them incredibly controversial and perceptively dangerous to institutional Anglicanism, evangelical sects, and secular culture at large through the consequent decades of the century.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ R. W. Church, *The Oxford Movement. Twelve Years, 1833-1845* (London: Macmillan and Co.,Ltd, 1900), 68.

⁹¹ John Henry Newman et al., *Tracts for the Times (1834) Project Canterbury*; At the beginning of the Movement in 1833, Keble, while oldest, was 41; Pusey was 33; Newman, 32; Isaac Williams, 31; and Froude, 30.

⁹² Jay, *Faith and Doubt in Victorian Britain*, 24.

⁹³ Knight, *The Church in the Nineteenth Century*, 15; The Tractarian theology was ‘never merely intellectual’ but a ‘way of believing’ and ‘living’; only a life of ‘devotion, attained through the Church’s sanctioned modes of prayer and sacramental worship, leading to penitence and the pursuit of holiness, could enable the believer to attain glimpses of God’s mysterious presence in His universe’ (Jay, *Faith and Doubt in Victorian Britain*, 25).

⁹⁴ Knight, *The Church in the Nineteenth Century*, xvi-xvii; Dominic Janes, *Victorian Reformation, The Fight Over Idolatry in the Church of England, 1840-60* (Oxford and New York: University of Oxford Press, 2009).

Thus, the Tractarians were complexly situated in the theological and political scene of eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain, where contentious terms of definition and differentiation changed radically and materialised over the course of the two centuries.⁹⁵ The Oxford Movement grew out of the traditional ‘Anglican High Churchmanship’ of the eighteenth century while at the same time diverging from those associations as the young theologians sought to separate themselves from the immediate history of the ‘High’ Church, against the ‘Evangelicals’.⁹⁶ The Tractarians would argue for a closer connection with (their own idea of the) Caroline Divines of the seventeenth century and, ultimately, the apostles of Christ and early patristic writers of the unified one ‘catholic’ church. By Burne-Jones’s time, these terms would have carried these newly acquired definitions where on the one hand, ‘High Church’ could be a derogatory term for the status-quo of eighteenth century traditionalists – with ‘Low Church’ being Evangelical and Calvinist sects – and on the other end, ‘higher’ forms of mass being identified with the increased reverence of Tractarians for older ceremonials of the earliest centuries of Christianity.⁹⁷ Increasing anxieties over ritual and the perceived ‘fetish’ of the Catholic material culture of ‘ritualism’ added to the diversity of extreme responses to Tractarianism, in the years of and following the establishment of the movement.⁹⁸ This has led to much confusion in the historiography of Tractarians, from its immediate scholars to present.⁹⁹ It was against evangelical groups, dissent, and the encroaching powers of the state that the Tractarians sought to revive the ancient connections and their traditions that revered and upheld the sense of God’s mystery throughout all of

⁹⁵ Knight, *The Church in the Nineteenth Century*, 14-15.

⁹⁶ Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context*, 10; 25; 29.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 32; 41; 64-8.

⁹⁸ ‘Ritualism is widely understood to have evolved from Tractarianism, with the key difference supposedly being an emphasis on material forms rather than theological innovation. This has meant that ritualism has often been less regarded by theologians and historians of ideas. However, if one thinks in terms of the encoding of ideas in material forms, a new appreciation of the significance of the movement can be gained’ (Janes, *Victorian Reformation*, 12).

⁹⁹ Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context*, 10.

salvation history. These notions will be further introduced in this chapter as they impacted Burne-Jones's early life. I will focus on introducing the Tractarian theological views on the incarnation and the sacraments as exemplified by Burne-Jones's hero, John Henry Newman, and particular controversies surrounding the specific sacraments of baptism and the eucharist.

As we shall see, young Burne-Jones would be affected by these aspects of the Oxford Movement. Born in the industrial city of Birmingham, 'Ted' had a childhood that he routinely recalled as devoid of beauty. His mother died when he was an infant, and growing up he would often move between families, 'aunts', and neighbours who let him join in their household activities as a respite from his father's depression.¹⁰⁰ Though initially baptised at St. Philip's, Birmingham, his father had purchased a family pew at the church of St. Mary's and it was not here but later experiences at distinctly 'higher' liturgical services that Burne-Jones became inspired by religious thought, practice, and theology.¹⁰¹ Though he drew 'devils' to entertain school friends, he never remembered encountering art that made an impact on his sense of or desire for beauty.¹⁰²

As a teenager, Burne-Jones found himself immersed in the theological and social discourse of mid-nineteenth century Birmingham. Attending grammar school at the Gothic-style King Edward's, he joined fellow students in their enthusiastic discussion of newly acquired knowledge that ranged from literary to religious and political themes. Birmingham, as a centre for expanding business enterprises, was a flourishing and yet dire place, where industry and immigration, wealth and poverty led to a diverse city of growth, conflict and, for

¹⁰⁰ *Memorials*, 1:1-6.

¹⁰¹ *Memorials*, 1:39. This will be further discussed in following pages.

¹⁰² *Memorials*, 1:21.

such young boys as Burne-Jones, confrontation with many new religious and political positions.¹⁰³

At this early age he was already showing a fascination with Biblical history: he was a firsthand witness to Jewish holidays and practices, having befriended neighbours who regularly included him in their rituals and celebrations, and he took a keen interest at an early age in the history and development of the church and its factions.¹⁰⁴ An early set of letters to his cousin Maria Choyce shows how he took time, care, and even theological consideration during his initial study. To show his capacity for and range of theological knowledge, Georgiana included these letters in her *Memorials*, showing how he devoted pages to laying out and explaining the different Christian sects and their respective doctrines in an intricate system of classification.¹⁰⁵ In all, his quite comprehensive survey of the long history of the Christian church exemplified his early ambition for religious studies and his ability to absorb and describe theological and historical intellectual material at an early age. These descriptions show ‘the inherent seriousness of his nature’ that friend Richard Watson (later Canon) Dixon would later recount to Georgiana.

For a boy of fifteen the range of information [in the letters] is great, especially as there were much fewer books of that sort that would give it directly on such subjects than there are now – and he was so busy with other things. The classification [distinguishing the different sects and their respective beliefs through time] seems to me his own, and is deliciously original...keen in judgment, and very decided...the striking thing is that in his main divisions, “Objects of Divine Worship” and “Blessings derivable from the Gospel,” he should have touched the two first great successive tendencies of theology,

¹⁰³ As early as 1839, when Burne-Jones was only six years old, his father was one of hundreds of ‘special constables’ brought in to try to quell Chartist riots rampaging through the city. With armed military scouting the neighbourhoods and London police summoned, violent riots in the Bull Ring area left the city in ruins (MacCarthy, *The Last Pre-Raphaelite*, 6-7); Conrad Gill, *History of Birmingham* vol. 1 (London, New York, and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1952); Norman Tiptaft ed., *Religion in Birmingham* (Warley: Norman Tiptaft, Ltd, 1972.)

¹⁰⁴ *Memorials*, 1:4.

¹⁰⁵ *Memorials*, 1:21-26.

the one being Christology (in the early Fathers,) and the other the nature of grace (in Augustine and after).¹⁰⁶

The fact that Burne-Jones could already identify the ‘two first great successive tendencies of theology’ – Christology and the nature of grace – in a patristic vein revealed his tendency towards complex religious thought.

Not long after this extensive display of already well-developed ideas about religious history, Burne-Jones made a visit to friends in Hereford in 1849. This would be a turning point in his acquisition of an opinion and worldview that would lead him to pursue a theological education. Furthermore, he became increasingly sensitive to the aesthetic of religious worship and art. In Hereford, Burne-Jones encountered for the first time the comprehensive presentation of divine beauty in the services of an ancient cathedral, where ‘for an hour,’ he wrote, ‘I am in Paradise. Oh that you [friend and schoolfellow, Cornell Price] could be with me then!’¹⁰⁷

The unity of song and architecture, coloured sun-filled light and ritual enchanted not only the aesthetic sense but the interest of Burne-Jones’s young and hungry intellect. We do not have a precise picture of what services and mass would have consisted of at the time of Burne-Jones’s attendance in the 1840s, since it was not until the 1850s that worship was analysed and recorded by the Cathedrals Commission.¹⁰⁸ However, we can get some sense that cathedrals in the early nineteenth century had Sunday services that consisted of a long morning service with matins, litany, and ante-communion.¹⁰⁹ Hereford’s custom, at this time, was a ‘divided’ morning service.¹¹⁰ Full communion services, it was recorded, were only said

¹⁰⁶ *Memorials*, 1:27.

¹⁰⁷ *Memorials*, 1:62.

¹⁰⁸ Philip Barrett, *English Cathedral Life in the Nineteenth Century* (London: SPCK, 1993), 115.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Barrett, *English Cathedral Life*, 115. Sunday evening services were not introduced at Hereford until 1863 (120).

at the cathedrals of Durham, Worcester, and York at this point – at Hereford, there was a monthly Communion by 1852, turning to weekly in 1865.¹¹¹ Choral eucharists were sparse,¹¹² though a surviving music list from 1851 shows a sample of the settings and anthems which included litanies and anthems by composers mostly of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries such as Purcell, along with three Tudor anthems.¹¹³ Altogether, Burne-Jones's memories evidence that this was markedly different from his previous experience at the church of St. Mary's in Birmingham. Indeed, there was not only the beauty of the architecture and times of prayer at the cathedral but an emphasis on sermons and the intellectual life that would introduce Burne-Jones to a new world of religious practice and theological thinking.¹¹⁴

It was in Hereford that Burne-Jones became acquainted with the fervent Reverend John Goss, an avowed Tractarian fresh from Oxford.¹¹⁵ Unpopular among some of his more traditional Anglican colleagues, the young vicar was attractive to the wide-eyed Burne-Jones, who was known already to prefer the underdog minority in an argument to the position of the majority.¹¹⁶ There is very little on record regarding the Reverend John Goss, particularly at

¹¹¹ Barrett, *English Cathedral Life*, 117.

¹¹² Ibid. Early in the nineteenth century, the only recorded example of a full choral eucharist was in 1802 at Durham. It was not until 1872 that a choral eucharist was celebrated at Hereford as well as Ely, Chichester, Chester, Exeter, Peterborough, and Salisbury.

¹¹³ This is the earliest known nineteenth century music list and spans the dates Monday 11 August to Sunday 24 August, 1851 (Barrett, *English Cathedral Life*, 152).

¹¹⁴ 'As early as 1835 it was the practice at Hereford to have sermons on all saints' days, state days and every Tuesday throughout the year, as well as on Easter Monday, Whitmonday and every Friday in Lent' (Barrett, *English Cathedral Life*, 135). This followed on from a revision of the Hereford statutes in 1637 by Archbishop Laud that ordered that 'for the banishing of ignorance, the encouragement of piety, and the promotions of Christ's kingdom' a sermon 'for the space of an hour or thereabouts' would be given on each Sunday and on major feast days that included the Nicene Creed (132).

¹¹⁵ See G. Aylmer and J Tiller, eds., *Hereford Cathedral: A History* (London: 2000), 320;426;458.

¹¹⁶ Georgiana recounted their meeting as follows in the *Memorials*: '...Rev. John Goss, then just ordained, afterwards the Custos of the Vicars Choral and Minor Canon of Hereford. He had a fine tenor voice, and an attractive personality that made him socially very popular, though at the time he must have been almost alone in the High Church views which he held. These views, however, attracted Edward, and Mr. Goss returned his regard. He was an Oxford man who had been there during the soul-searching time of Newman's succession from the Anglican Church, and it was to him, I believe, that Edward owed his introduction to Newman's writings' (1:39).

the time Burne-Jones would have come to know him. John Goss (MA), vicars choral, was only elected to his position in 1853 – after Burne-Jones had met him in 1849 – and after that, made Vicar of the adjoining parish church of St. John the Baptist in 1860 and subchanter in 1862.¹¹⁷ He died 27 September, 1877.¹¹⁸ In *Hereford Cathedral: A History*, he is only mentioned in small incidents: the commissioning of a memorial stained glass window for him following his death and arguments about the status of lay clerks and whether a mace should precede the vicars choral in procession.¹¹⁹ Burne-Jones's encounter with Goss is briefly memorialized by Georgiana as a distinct turning point in Burne-Jones's theological formation, and though little of his precise instruction to Burne-Jones is recorded, Goss is known to have introduced Burne-Jones to the teachings of the leader of the Oxford Movement, John Henry Newman, by giving him Newman's writings - potentially the text of one or a collection of all of Newman's Oxford *University Sermons*. Georgiana says, 'It was not at school that he met with Newman's Sermons, but, as we have seen, very probably at Hereford, where, after his own way, he had quietly absorbed them.'¹²⁰

By the time Burne-Jones returned from Hereford, he was eager to convince his father to switch their family pew from the evangelical church of St. Mary's to one with a higher form of the Anglican mass at St. Paul's.¹²¹ Not only is this a rather radical and unusual event – a son dictating the terms of religious worship to a father - this is also an important point of comparison that allows us to see the development of Burne-Jones's ideas about the church at this early point of his theological formation. Shortly after Burne-Jones's birth and baptism at St. Philip's, Birmingham, his father had bought a family pew at St. Mary's where the leading

¹¹⁷ This was according to the Hereford Cathedral databases. Email correspondence with Hereford Librarian, Dr. Rosemary Firman, 6 May 2017.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ G. Aylmer and J Tiller, eds., *Hereford Cathedral: A History*, 320;426;458.

¹²⁰ *Memorials*, 1:58.

¹²¹ *Memorials*, 1:39;82.

Evangelical J. Casebow Barnett drew many attendants over the course of his ministry and was known popularly as a ‘fascinating preacher’.¹²² St. Paul’s, by contrast, was a higher church led by the Reverend George Burton Potts Latimer, who made the church into a controversial ‘centre’ for Tractarianism. Even when the Joneses had moved there, the congregational numbers began to dwindle as more moderate Church of England members left their own pews.¹²³ While Latimer had succeeded clergymen more ‘typical of the better clergy of the eighteenth century – gentlemen and scholars, Tory and anti-reform in politics, conscientious and devoted,’ he had stepped to the pulpit at a time when the population explosion of the 1830s and 40s was forcing ‘this conventional, middle class church’ to reconsider its stance and position in society.¹²⁴ In the theology of the Oxford Movement, welfare and ceremonial were necessarily interlocked; particularly Tractarian parishes throughout the country were redesigning and lowering pews to offer more equal access to and experience of the mass.¹²⁵ Latimer’s controversially Tractarian views were aligned with this frame of mind: known for his devotion, ‘if somewhat paternalistically, to the welfare of his people,’¹²⁶ he was later made the object of scorn by the more cautious members of his congregation when two candles were allowed to be placed at a communion service – a distinctly ‘decadent’ move that could raise suspicions about the celebrant’s potential ‘Romanist’ sympathies.¹²⁷ However, this was the theological discourse that had attracted

¹²² Gill, *History of Birmingham*, 1:375.

¹²³ Canon R.S.O Stevens, ‘Church of England,’ in *Religion in Birmingham*, 41-2; ‘The Not-So-Straightforward Story of the Patrons of St. Paul’s Church Birmingham’, accessed 1 November 2016, http://jsprints-ink.co.uk/the-notsostraightforward-story-of-the-patrons-of-st-pauls-church-birmingham-1779-2012/#THE_FIFTH_PATRON_GEORGE_BURTON_POTTS_LATIMER_1845-1867.

¹²⁴ Stevens, ‘Church of England,’ 41-2.

¹²⁵ Herring, *The Oxford Movement in Practice*, 85. In the 1840s and 1850’s, ‘the assault on the pews was unrelenting.’

¹²⁶ Stevens, ‘Church of England,’ 41-2.

¹²⁷ ‘The Not-So-Straightforward Story of the Patrons of St. Paul’s Church Birmingham’; These additional candles could be considered part of the ‘items of the liturgical and sacramental culture of Catholicism’ which were associated with the host and could be ‘regarded by opponents as being neither sacred nor even wholesomely symbolic, but as being both idols and also the equivalent of the magical fetish objects of primitive

Burne-Jones after meeting Goss, experiencing mass at Hereford, and reading Newman. Rather than the ‘pomposity’ of Barnett’s style at St. Mary’s, Latimer’s ‘positive doctrine’ attracted Burne-Jones, who favourably remembered how he would preach ‘most firmly and withal most gently.’¹²⁸

Burne-Jones attended these markedly more controversial services while also experiencing ideas of John Henry Newman within close range. At that point, Newman had already joined the Roman Catholic Church, having left the Oxford Movement and gone over to Rome in 1845; further, he had been appointed to found and lead an oratory only a walk away from Burne-Jones in Birmingham.¹²⁹ This notable point of complexity is a peculiar situation that is important for deepening our understanding of the theological context Burne-Jones encountered, his later disappointment with Oxford and the ministry, and how ultimately Newman’s particular theology affected the development of Burne-Jones’s art.¹³⁰ Though Burne-Jones read the Anglican Newman in the sermons that Goss had given him, the Newman Burne-Jones might have encountered in Birmingham was a Catholic. If Burne-Jones had heard Newman give a sermon in those years, he might have heard the theologian’s

peoples. Other ‘Catholic’ ornaments such as altar cloths and vestments were also denounced as objects of idolatry’ (Janes, *Victorian Reformation*, 111); It was not until the early twentieth century that the ‘use of lighted candles in daylight – which only a few years earlier had been seen as the mark of extreme Anglo-Catholicism – had been adopted in over a fifth of the Anglican churches in England and Wales’ (Knight, *The Church in the Nineteenth Century*, 28).

¹²⁸ *Memorials*, 1:39;82. ‘Positive doctrine’, in this context, could refer to Latimer’s clear and definite way of teaching doctrine. This would be in contrast to a more ambiguous position on doctrinal issues.

¹²⁹ Newman founded the oratory in Birmingham in 1849 – the very year Burne-Jones was meeting Goss – the Church of St. Anne in Alcester Street (relocating to the Edgbaston area of the city in 1852). It was said Newman preached his first sermon there to a large and diverse audience of poor and emigrated on ‘How to Escape the False Worship of the World’. See Fitzgerald, *Edward Burne-Jones*, 19; Sheridan Gilley, *Newman and His Age* (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1990), 258.

¹³⁰ In the *Memorials*, Georgiana says Burne-Jones ‘had believed that help and strength for the life he had chosen must await him in the University which had so lately been the centre of a great religious movement. Newman’s simple and lofty exhortations had sunk into his heart, and created there such belief in the writer as to make even the secession to Rome seem an act upon which it was impossible to pass judgment, and which time alone could shew itself whether he himself might not feel bound to follow. He had thought to find the place still warm from the fervour of the learned and pious men who had shaken the whole land by their cry of danger within and without the Church. To him it was like a room from which some one he loved had just gone out, and where at every turn he would find traces of his friend. But when he got there the whole life seemed to him languid and indifferent, with scarcely anything left to shew the fiery time so lately past’ (1:71).

thoughts on topics ranging from ‘Christ upon the Waters’; ‘Order, the Witness and Instrument of Unity’; and ‘The Mission of St. Philip Neri,’ all of which Newman spoke upon within the first few years of the 1850s and were later published among copious volumes which not only include lectures and sermons but also letters, poetry, and fiction.¹³¹

Though later Burne-Jones would recall how disappointed he was when he found out a Roman Catholic mass he had attended was all ‘wicked,’¹³² we must see Burne-Jones and his own theological education poised between complex conflicts between Anglicanism and ‘Romanism,’ High and Low Church, that fundamentally related to how one defined oneself in society – as an ‘Englishman’ or a ‘traitor’. Anyone associated with the ‘Ritualist’ side of Anglicanism could be seen having dangerous associations with Rome, the Pope, and strange idolatrous fetishes. Across magazines and popular culture, such as in *Punch*, Tractarianism, ‘Puseyism’, and ritualism could be attacked ‘as a result of prejudices ranging from the obvious one of anti-Catholicism to anticlericalism, antisemitism, misogyny, iconophobia, and xenophobia’.¹³³ In the increasing diversity of Anglican and ‘Nonconformist’ positions, Burne-Jones’s particular attachment to Newman the Catholic convert and Tractarianism should be investigated further.

John Henry Newman

In the *Memorials*, Georgiana includes a letter to an unnamed friend in which Burne-Jones describes how Newman ‘taught me so much I do mind – things that will never be out of me’.¹³⁴ Although the inclusion of the long quotation propitiously appears near the beginning of the biography, the letter is in fact thirty years after Burne-Jones’s time of

¹³¹ John Henry Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons* 8 vols. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1908).

¹³² Lago, *Burne-Jones Talking*, 50.

¹³³ Janes, *Victorian Reformation*, 48-49.

¹³⁴ *Memorials*, 1:59.

theological study and well into his career as an artist.¹³⁵ While it is and indeed has been a useful description of that early time in his life, its placement in the beginning of his ‘life story’ has skewed the significance of what the quotation also says about his later life and vision. Further, Georgiana’s selective inclusion of this, as opposed to other, material can tell us much about the deeper complications of Burne-Jones’s relationship with Newman, his theology, and potential ideas Georgiana might have wanted to leave out, in this instance but also in her general discussion Burne-Jones’s religious (and personal) relationships. The fuller context of the letters suggests broader scope for questions regarding Newman’s continued impact and the complexity of his influence on Burne-Jones as he remembered his own personal developments in faith and art as he looked back on this earlier formative period in his life. In this correspondence, Burne-Jones is writing to Frances (Graham) Horner, a muse and friend through his later life.¹³⁶ When he is impressing upon her Newman’s influence, it is following up and justifying a remark in his previous letter, in which he had been inspired by a ‘divine happy speech’ by Newman, ‘two minutes long but centuries lovely’ and went on to declare: ‘I wish I was a Catholic, I do.’¹³⁷ Frances’ response does not remain, but as her biographer Andrew Gailey states, as the daughter of an ardent evangelical she must have reprimanded him for such a controversial inclination.¹³⁸ Thus, while Burne-Jones tries to go

¹³⁵ ‘When I was fifteen or sixteen he [Newman] taught me so much I do mind – things that will never be out of me. In an age of sofas and cushions he taught me to be indifferent to comfort, and in an age of materialism he taught me to venture all on the unseen, and this so early that it was well in me when life began, and I was equipped before I went to Oxford with a real good panoply and it has never failed me. So if this world cannot tempt me with money or luxury – and it can’t – or anything it has in its trumpery treasure-house, it is most of all because he said it in a way that touched me, not scolding nor forbidding, nor much leading – walking with me a step in front. So he stands to me as a great image or symbol of a man who never stooped, and who put all this world’s life in one splendid venture, which he knew as well as you or I might fail, but with a glorious scorn of every thing that was not his dream’ (*Memorials*, 1:59).

¹³⁶ Georgiana often leaves much about Frances Graham and other muses out of her biography – most notoriously, Burne-Jones’s later mistress, Maria Zambaco.

¹³⁷ Burne-Jones to Frances (Graham) Horner, 7 July 1890, quoted by Andrew Gailey, *Portrait of a Muse: Frances Graham, Edward Burne-Jones and the Pre-Raphaelite Dream* (London: Wilmington Square Books, 2020), 121. While this is a secondary citing of a quotation, it is important to note the context of the fuller quotation within the letters discussed by Horner’s most recent biographer.

¹³⁸ Gailey, *Portrait of a Muse*, 121.

back on his statement on Roman Catholicism by downplaying Newman's hold on him in later life,¹³⁹ he speaks adamantly and glowingly on the 'things that will never be out of me', saying 'so if this world cannot tempt me with money or luxury – and it can't – or anything it has in its trumpery treasure house, it is most of all because he said it in a way that touched me, not scolding nor forbidding, nor much leading – walking with me a step in front.'¹⁴⁰

This conversation begins to show how Newman remained on his mind as 'a great image or symbol of a man'¹⁴¹ - not just a remembrance from a distant and insignificant past but an unfailing influence, still writing and controversially active at the time Burne-Jones was creating art, reading literature, and conversing on the latest topics in art, music, and theology with friends and colleagues in his expansive circle.¹⁴² Around the same period, Burne-Jones would be dreaming of Newman, telling Helen Mary Gaskell: 'Last night I dreamed of Newman, the old Cardinal, and was with him again – but in an omnibus of all places, good company it was'.¹⁴³ This persistence of Newman, in shaping Burne-Jones's formation, his intellectual imagination, and in his memory in the last decades of his life, will be an important factor for this thesis to consider as analysis of artworks through Burne-Jones's career unfolds. This portion of the dissertation takes a step towards introducing Newman, so to present an idea of the influence of the theologian in examples of Newman's theology, particularly in the *University Sermon* texts Burne-Jones would have readily accessed as a

¹³⁹ Burne-Jones begins by saying 'I have thought many times of what you have said about Newman and perhaps you are right. . . He might not affect me now; it was different when I was fifteen or sixteen and he taught me so much I do not mind – things that will never be out of me' (Burne-Jones to Frances [Graham] Horner, quoted by Gailey, *Portrait of a Muse*, 121).

¹⁴⁰ *Memorials*, 1:59.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² Letters and diaries of those such as Mary Gladstone and William Allingham include Burne-Jones in a diverse circle of social exchange, where conversation on these various topics flourished. See Mary Gladstone, *Mary Gladstone (Mrs. Drew): Her Diaries and Letters* ed. Lucy Lyttelton (Masterman. London: Methuen and Co., 1930) and William Allingham, *A Diary* ed. H. Allingham and D. Radford (Harmondsworth and New York: Penguin Books, 1985).

¹⁴³ Edward Burne-Jones to Mrs. Francis May Gaskell, album of letters 1892-94, vol. I WA2015.66 Western Art Print Room, Ashmolean Museum Oxford, UK.

young man.¹⁴⁴ The following discussion will begin to suggest the potential consequences of that theology on Burne-Jones's own 'theology of art'.

John Henry Newman (1801-1890) led the Oxford Movement until his controversial conversion in 1845. Newman's *University Sermons*, preached between 1826 and 1845 at Oxford and published in several editions thereafter, provide a sample of the broader doctrines with which Burne-Jones would have come in contact during his theological studies at Birmingham and Oxford.¹⁴⁵ Given from the University Church pulpit at St. Mary's and published before Newman's conversion from Anglicanism to Catholicism, these sermons 'in discussions of so difficult a character' give a sample of Newman's argument against what he saw as the stripped-down superficiality of society and for the return of a more active and present form of Christian faith centred around the incarnation of Christ.¹⁴⁶ Many of the *University Sermons* are significant for previewing Newman's theology, as they prefigure his very important later works *The Grammar of Assent* and the *Development of Christian Doctrine*.¹⁴⁷

Across these sermons and in his work to follow, Newman particularly emphasised the incarnation as a tangible, historical event, with Christ as a tangible, historical figure, that required concrete, aesthetic forms of worship.¹⁴⁸ To elucidate this, he extensively summarised and philosophised, preached and wrote about the long history of the church, praising it in its time of unity and quoting frequently from the texts of the Church Fathers from the first half of the first millennium. In a society of confused morals and rapid industrial change, Newman thought the church should reinstate contentious rituals and doctrines such

¹⁴⁴ *Memorials*, 1:58.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ John Henry Newman, *Fifteen Sermons Preached Before The University of Oxford Between A.D. 1826 and 1843*, 3rd ed (London, Oxford and Cambridge: Rivingtons, 1872), 14.

¹⁴⁷ Ker, *John Henry Newman*, 258.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 268.

as more frequent communion and veneration of the Virgin Mary and the saints to bring people closer to these older, seemingly more virtuous and godly ways of life. He argued that contemporary culture had dangerously separated church from state, religion from science and philosophy, faith from reason, Sundays from the everyday. ‘And this evil has in a measure befallen us,’ Newman said. ‘That it does not increase, we must look to that early religious training, to which there can be no doubt all persons – those in the higher as well as in the poorer classes of community – should be submitted’, speaking ‘not of themselves, but as they were moved by the inspiration of God Himself’.¹⁴⁹ Newman therefore advocated increased personal, physical interactions with faith; a faith at once grounded in the universalising, ordinary experience of the individual common man and integrally related to the greater ‘mystery’ of the supernatural divine world. All these he saw interrelated within extensive systems of thinking, feeling, and acting.¹⁵⁰

The early sermons on ‘The Philosophical Temper, First Enjoined by the Gospel’, and ‘The Influence of Natural and Revealed Religion Respectively’ provide an introduction not only to the historical argument for the relation of philosophy and Christian religion but also to the supreme centrality of Christ’s incarnation as an express ‘medium’ for Christian philosophical understanding.¹⁵¹ While the ‘essential principle and sanction’ of Conscience provides a natural and ‘attainable creed’ of ‘religious knowledge not impossible to Heathen Philosophy,’ Newman argues it ultimately ‘failed’ because it degraded the ‘invisible majesty’ of God by attributing ‘unworthy, multiplied and inconsistent images’ to Him and therefore

¹⁴⁹ Newman, *Fifteen Sermons*, 14-15.

¹⁵⁰ Mary Katherine Tillman, *John Henry Newman: Man of Letters* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2015), xxxiv;xliv-xlv; Gilley, *Newman and His Age*, 1-3.

¹⁵¹ Newman, *Fifteen Sermons*, 25.

shattered ‘the moral scheme of the world into partial and discordant systems, in which appetite and expedience received the sanction due only to virtue.’¹⁵²

While, then, Natural Religion was not without provision for all the deepest and truest religious feelings, yet presenting no tangible history of the Deity, no points of his personal character (if we may so speak without irreverence), it wanted that most efficient incentive to all action, a starting or a rallying point – an object on which the affections could be placed, and the energies concentrated...How, then, should the beauty of virtue move the heart, while it was an abstraction?¹⁵³

Only through Christ, Newman said, could God directly lay out ‘His intended grant of a system of religious truth, grounded on that mysterious economy of Divine Providence in which His own incarnation occupies the principal place.’¹⁵⁴ Up to that point, ‘science and nature could produce no joint-work; it was left for an express Revelation to propose the Object in which they should both be reconciled, and to satisfy the desires of both in a real and manifested incarnation of the Deity’ in Christ.¹⁵⁵

Thus, while the pagan faithful experienced piety only through a vague and disfigured knowledge of their ‘relation between the soul and something exterior,’ Newman argued that ancient, apostolic Christianity encompassed both the ‘natural’ and ‘revealed’ elements of religious authority. Christ, he explained, ‘supplies the deficiency’ of past traditions of faith and the ‘character’ of Christ was not necessarily contradictory to either science or nature.¹⁵⁶ Newman argued for the essentially ‘Philosophical Temper, First Enjoined by the Gospel’. These are the words and actions of Christ, his initial followers, and their ritualised, regulated forms of prayer which would be intertwined with classical traditions of intellectual

¹⁵² Newman, *Fifteen Sermons*, 18;21-24.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, 23-24.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 17.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 24.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 18-22.

philosophy.¹⁵⁷ Christianity was a ‘learned religion; it came into the world as the offspring of an elder system, to which it was indebted for much which it contained, and which its professors were obliged to continually consult.’¹⁵⁸ Newman claimed that Christ and the early Christian theologians of the young church straddled the philosophical past of the Greeks and Jews and provided the new way forward. In his view, to disregard the role of Christ in the progress of philosophy, literature, and the sciences was to miss the pivotal role he played in the intellectual and moral scheme of society. Without his physical, ‘revealed’ existence, there was no sufficient way to conceptualise the human relation to the divine, and subsequently, human relations within the world.¹⁵⁹ He was the ‘object,’ the ‘image,’ the ‘character’ necessary for the embodiment of the infinite unknown ‘appositely illustrated in the words of the text.’¹⁶⁰ These ideas are important as Newman continued to develop, in his Anglican and later Catholic thinking, the necessity of Christ’s divine authority and the active participation of the imagination in a real assent to the revealed reality of Christianity.¹⁶¹

For Newman, Christ’s centrality as an ‘object on which the affections could be placed’ leads him to an argument to maintain active forms of communal and individual forms of prayer, and further, to understand prayer and worship itself as the articulation of doctrine as it developed.¹⁶² In Newman’s theology, Christ was the physical manifestation of the invisible miracles of God; the faithful therefore must resort to physical manifestations such as

¹⁵⁷ ‘We have to begin to take seriously Newman’s insistence that Christianity has brought us a new way of speaking’ (Fr. Jonathan Robinson, *In No Strange Land: The Embodied Mysticism of Saint Philip Neri* [Kettering, OH: Anglico Press, 2015], 85).

¹⁵⁸ Newman, *Fifteen Sermons*, 1

¹⁵⁹ Further, in this line of thinking, Newman would argue for the importance of the personal relation and imagination in faith, particularly, as Fr. Jonathan Robinson described in terms of the saints: ‘One of the reasons we are given the Saints is so that each of them, in his own way, may strike us, through the force of his own personality, with the reality and truth of Christ. Sanctity is something lived, and the lives of the saints are important because in the end, as Newman said, it is people we trust and not arguments’ (*In No Strange Land*, 6).

¹⁶⁰ Newman, *Fifteen Sermons*, 26.

¹⁶¹ The ideas regarding imagination and assent, Newman will expand upon in *The Grammar of Assent*, as Ker argues (*John Henry Newman*, 640). These principles further play into the argument about the divine authority of Christ in the Church (Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition* vol. 5, 189).

¹⁶² Newman, *Fifteen Sermons*, 23-4; Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition* vol. 5, 268.

rituals, turn to manifest places of worship such as the Church, and consult a hierarchy of church representatives such as bishops to maintain in this world their belief in the next. Without Christ's visible form, and without the visible forms of worship seeking to commemorate Him in the sacraments, Newman thought that the invisible power of His presence would be diminished in the individual hearts of Christians and their lives within the social whole. In broader Tractarian thought, the lack of ceremony in Protestantism and the nature of the 'Protestant imagination' consequently corresponded to a lack of true appreciation of Christ, His incarnation, the sacraments in which His presence rests, and His influence on the totality of society.¹⁶³ Further, these concerns regarding the liturgy, the performative rituals around the sacraments and their validity, and the structure of the church itself all related to a broader debate about the role of Christian tradition, sacramental liturgy, and creedal professions in the nineteenth century.¹⁶⁴ With the rise of historical Christianity and scientific perspectives of the Enlightenment, theologians across denominations had to 'withstand the scrutiny of the historical consciousness of the nineteenth century' and 'yield to a redefinition of the consensus of tradition in which its temporal dimension became a decisive component.'¹⁶⁵ Newman, as his theology changed from Anglicanism to Catholicism, would seek to clarify the meaning of doctrine, its development, and expression in the dogmatic and ritualistic elements of life.¹⁶⁶ Indeed, in his view, it was often from the history

¹⁶³ Ker, *John Henry Newman*, 351-4; 364-5.

¹⁶⁴ 'In the nineteenth century, that tension between "tradition" as the object of the historian's research and "tradition" as the authority of the theologian's doctrine (and for the church's doctrine) came to a head in the disputes surrounding the definition of the doctrine of papal infallibility by the First Vatican Council' (Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition* vol. 5, 258); Hichliff, *God and History*, 8.

¹⁶⁵ Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition* vol. 5, 265; Joseph Pearce, 'Tradition and Conversion in English Literature,' in *Victorian Churches and Churchmen: Essays Presented to Vincent Alan McClelland* (Woodbridge, Suffolk and Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press, 2005), 183-4.

¹⁶⁶ In 1849 as a Catholic, Newman would claim: 'If the world has its fascinations, so surely has the Altar of the living God; if its pomps and vanities dazzle, so much more should the vision of Angels ascending and descending on the heavenly ladder; if sights of the earth intoxicate, and its music is a spell upon the soul, behold Mary pleads with us, over against them, with her chaste eyes, and offers the Eternal Child for us to caress, while sounds of cherubim are heard all round signing from out the fulness of the Divine Glory' (*Discourses to Mixed Congregations* [London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1908], 70).

of the liturgy, rather than the formal dogma, that doctrines regarding the eucharist and the real presence could be deciphered and, furthermore, carried forward.¹⁶⁷

In this line of thought, Newman connected Christianity with its pagan past and its underlying, though disregarded, presence in contemporary scientific thought, and also literally equates Christ with an image, Christianity with the philosophical imagination, imagination with illustration and God's creation through history.¹⁶⁸ He conflated words and images in the divine process of revelation – of 'Word made Flesh' in Christ and natural religion justified by the revealed. This is just one example of how Newman used concepts like illustration and exhibition to expound upon the Christian experience and all its paradoxical mysteries in a structured system of faith and virtue, past, present, and future. As we shall see in the discussion about 'The Holy Eucharist', this language, particular to the mood and mode of Tractarian belief, allowed Newman to develop controversially 'advanced' views about the history of the church and its sacraments that will lead to the Roman Catholic theology that Burne-Jones might have been encountering in person in Birmingham.¹⁶⁹ Such thinking suggests an intellectual background that will be later seen implicitly molding Burne-Jones's own conception of art, its methods, and goals. This theological language, as it develops historical concepts in relation to natural and revealed religion, may indicate a way

¹⁶⁷ Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition* vol. 5, 265; 'Newman's act of conversion united the Catholic vision with the Catholic reality, the artistic word with the flesh of the Divine Artist, and the creative mind with the Body of the Church. In Newman, the convert and the authentic tradition became one' (Pearce, 'Tradition and Conversion,' 186).

¹⁶⁸ Ker, *John Henry Newman*, 258; 351-4; 364-5; This topic has been of much interest in recent scholarship on Newman, particularly in Bernard Dive, *John Henry Newman and the Imagination* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2019).

¹⁶⁹ 'The historical dimension of Catholicism led Newman to say [after his conversion to Catholicism] there was "an utter incongruity" between Protestantism and historical Christianity. "To be deep in history", he said, "is to cease to be Protestant"' (Fr. Jonathan Robinson, *The Mass and Modernity: Walking to Heaven Backward* [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005], 159).

to begin questioning how Burne-Jones may, in Ruskin's words of 1884, harmonize so many distinctly mythical themes with the 'loveliest of the Christian legend'.¹⁷⁰

At King Edward's

Burne-Jones had begun his formal education in 1844 at King Edward's Grammar School, entering the lower class of boys destined for design, manufacture, and industry.¹⁷¹ This was a significant point of change in his life. After only accessing his father's scant library of fables like Aesop, his 'whole free will' was allowed to converge 'on books books books.'¹⁷² No credit could be given to any curriculum for Burne-Jones's vast ability to attain and retain knowledge – he would be remembered for the huge numbers of books he borrowed, including particular favourites such as George Catlin's *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians* (1841), Robert Curzon's *Visit to the Monasteries in the Levant* (1849), Alexander von Humboldt's *Cosmos* (1845-62, trans. 1848-65) and *Views of Nature* (1808, trans. 1849), and Austen Henry Layard's *Nineveh and Its Remains* (1849).¹⁷³ His particularly 'special' friend, Cornell Price, remembered taking walks with Burne-Jones, reading Macpherson's *Ossian* and various other volumes of ballads and translations aloud.¹⁷⁴ This love of astronomy, adventure, and mythology shows Burne-Jones's love of ancient ideas, mysterious places, and the hugeness of history and space that would continue through his life.

¹⁷⁰ For more on Ruskin describing Burne-Jones as a 'mythic' painter see Chapter 4, 'Implications for a Mythic Art'; Ruskin, *Art of England*, 40.

¹⁷¹ As Georgiana recounts: 'The school was divided, then as now, into Departments, Classical and English, or "Commercial," as the latter was familiarly called. The fact of Mr. Jones's placing his son in this Department proves that his intention at the time was to give him merely such an education as would fit him for business. Boys on this side of the school usually left at about sixteen. Latin was taught in both schools, but Greek in the Classical only. No fees were paid by the scholars, the endowment being one of the richest in the kingdom, and, except for the cost of books, education was absolutely free.' (*Memorials*, 1:15)

¹⁷² *Memorials*, 1:18.

¹⁷³ *Memorials*, 1:58. 'Among novelists,' Georgiana continued in her list. 'Scott and Dickens were his first heroes.'

¹⁷⁴ *Memorials*, 1:18.

Despite Burne-Jones's propensity for independent learning, one particular teacher had a profound influence on him during this period: Abraham Kerr Thompson. Later in life, writing to Helen May Gaskell, Burne-Jones remembered him as 'the only man with any brains at all who had anything to do with my teaching nay right up to the end of my Oxford days, no one could compare with him...yes no one taught me anything but he only...With the flattest sentence in the world, he could take us to Aegean waters and the marshes of Babylon and hills of Caucasus and wilds of Tartary and the constellations and abysses of space.'¹⁷⁵ Burne-Jones 'worshipped him' when he was 'little,' the teacher becoming not just a mythical but the Biblical figure 'Abraham of Ur of the Chaldees...and I am sure if he had bought a piece of land to bury his Sarah in he would have been just as courteous as the first Abraham.'¹⁷⁶ Thompson would stimulate the young Burne-Jones's imaginative sense and provided him significant guidance for how one might use that imagination in a concrete way. 'He taught us few facts,' Burne-Jones remembered. 'but spent all the time drilling us that we might know what to do with them when they came.'¹⁷⁷ This form of learning, rather than the dry monotony of coursework he was to experience later at Oxford, was to be his means of pursuing knowledge in the coming years that would stay with him for the rest of his life, in theology and in art. It was in the years during and following his time with Thompson he would make that decisive visit to Hereford Cathedral, dive headlong into Tractarianism, and learn 'facts' so he 'might know what to do with them' someday.

Filling himself with books, the perceptive and quick-learning Burne-Jones became head boy of the English 'Commercial' Department by the age of fifteen – only a year away from when many in that part of the school would end their education to take up a life in

¹⁷⁵ Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, July 23, 1894, MS Add 54217, vol. 2, fol. 257-8, British Library.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

business. However, Mr. Thompson advised that the boy stay on longer, and he moved to have Burne-Jones advanced to the Classical School in 1849, where more advanced classes such as Greek were offered. This was a significant step towards an Oxford or Cambridge education and the ministry.¹⁷⁸

In 1851, he was excelling in many of his courses and was transferred from the Second to the First Class school, where philosophical, political, and religious debates were discussed among the more intellectual, competitive students. Of ‘surpassing interest’ to him, Georgiana recounts, remained ‘religion as associated with the history of the Christian Church and actual position in modern times.’¹⁷⁹ The Gorham Judgement of 1850 was an important case for the late Tractarian movement, and, consequently, a topic for discussion amongst the King Edward’s boys. Burne-Jones was particularly inflamed by the matter, using his new interests and passions to take decisive leadership of the minority Tractarian side in the students’ discussions. He fervently debated his Methodist friend Richard Watson (later Canon) Dixon as they walked together to Dr. Gifford’s Greek Testament voluntary classes on Sunday afternoon. ‘Often, when class was over, they prolonged time together by walking up and down New Street, talking and arguing as they went’ Georgiana said. Edward was determined and ‘anxious to win over his friend to his point of view.’¹⁸⁰ This moment in his intellectual development has been little mentioned or examined. Here, original pamphlets and deeper secondary source research into the Gorham Judgment pose questions about the seriousness of Burne-Jones’s interest in theology and the topics that caught his attention.

¹⁷⁸ *Memorials*, 1:31-35.

¹⁷⁹ *Memorials*, 1:51-2.

¹⁸⁰ *Memorials*, 1:52.

The Gorham Judgment

Creedal and doctrinal formularies were contested repeatedly through the nineteenth century and would factor significantly into the personal conversions of various leading figures as well as the nature of the Church of England more broadly.¹⁸¹ In the early days of the Oxford Movement following the political changes of 1833, Newman had attempted to articulate the Anglican Thirty-Nine Articles and the *Book of Common Prayer* in light of developing tradition, in what he proposed as a ‘*via media*’ (‘middle way’) between Protestant and Catholic aspects of the church.¹⁸² Newman and the Tractarians were repeatedly raising questions about the validity of authority as handed down through creedal documents and members of the church, and it was the study of this history that factored into Newman’s conversion to Rome in 1845.¹⁸³ As a turning point in the second half of Tractarianism, the Gorham Judgment had important implications for the relations between church and state and the maintenance of the Anglican tradition in the Thirty-Nine Articles as defended by the remaining Oxford Movement leaders. It was during and after this event that ‘High Churchmen’ began ‘openly’ distrusting bishops and a fresh wave of Tractarians converted to Rome.¹⁸⁴

In 1847, George Cornelius Gorham had been presented for appointment as vicar of Brampton Speke. Gorham held ‘unsound’ views that baptismal regeneration was conditional on the faith to follow, rather than on the established view that the immediate effects of grace were within the sacramental act of baptism itself.¹⁸⁵ The Bishop Henry Phillpotts objected and contested the appointment, which proceeded to be challenged in court. The Court of

¹⁸¹ Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition* vol. 5, 271-2; Ker, *John Henry Newman*, 350.

¹⁸² Ker, *John Henry Newman*, 105.

¹⁸³ Knight, *The Church in the Nineteenth Century*, 16; Robinson, *In No Strange Land*, 159; Pearce, ‘Tradition and Conversion,’ 186.

¹⁸⁴ Bentley, *Ritualism and Politics*, 15; Janes, *Victorian Reformation*, 65; Ker, *John Henry Newman*, 350.

¹⁸⁵ Bentley, *Ritualism and Politics*, 15.

Arches condemned Gorham's views as heretical, but this condemnation was overturned in what many Tractarian 'High' Churchmen would consider an astounding ruling by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.¹⁸⁶ Catholic Newman, asked to speak at the London Oratory in 1850, responded by dedicating one of his homilies to the case and claimed that the 'neutral reading [of the *Book of Common Prayer* by the Committee]...was more congenial with the existing and traditional sentiments of the English people', exemplifying for him how currently 'neither does English law seek justice, nor English religion seek truth'.¹⁸⁷

This instance prompted E.B. Pusey to write *The Royal Supremacy: Not an Arbitrary Authority, but Limited by the Laws of the Church, of which Kings are Members*.¹⁸⁸ In this case, there was a complete 'mis-stating' and therefore misunderstanding of both the heretical threat posed by Gorham as well as the 'formularies of the Church of England'.¹⁸⁹

Disregarding the standards set forth in the *Book of Common Prayer* on baptism and the authority that Phillpotts and Pusey saw vested in the church itself, Gorham's acquittal represented a usurpation of the standard doctrines to which churchmen and statesmen alike were supposed to uphold. The Privy Council's ruling in favour of Gorham's appointment was further complicated by the fact that the Archbishops of Canterbury and York sat as non-voting advisors, present to and approving of the final decision. Gorham's position, as Pusey pointed out resolutely, went directly against the Article of the Creed that, 'One Baptism for the remission of sins,' which was 'plainly part of the faith, the belief in the "One Lord,"

¹⁸⁶ Bentley, *Ritualism and Politics*, 15. As the case was pending, Edward George Kirwan Browne recorded that the 'Tractarian party' remained 'in suspense, anxiously waiting for the moment when six laymen, forming the Judicial Committee of Her Majesty's Privy Council, should decide whether Mr. Gorham was orthodox or heterodox' (*Annals of the Tractarian Movement from 1842 to 1860*, 3rd ed. [London: 1861], 176).

¹⁸⁷ Newman, *Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching 1872* [New York and Bombay: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1900], 350; Ker, *John Henry Newman*, 350;416.

¹⁸⁸ E.B Pusey, *The Royal Supremacy: Not an Arbitrary Authority, but Limited by the Laws of the Church, of which Kings are Members* (Oxford: J.H Parker, 1850).

¹⁸⁹ Pusey, *The Royal Supremacy*, 172.

Whose Precious Blood, shed at this time for us, washes away our sins, in and through the Sacrament of Baptism. “One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism, one God and Father of all.”¹⁹⁰ According to the *Annals of the Tractarian Movement from 1842 to 1860*, Tractarians thereafter critiqued the Crown’s ‘power of hearing and deciding in appeal of all matter, howsoever purely spiritual’ and this ruling’s ‘variance with the Divine Office of the Universal Church, as prescribed by the law of Christ’.¹⁹¹ In light of this, they recognised the limited role of the Crown in ‘*temporal accidents of spiritual things*’ but not to ‘hear and judge in the appeal of internal state or merits of spiritual questions, touching doctrine or discipline, the custody of which is committed to the Church alone’.¹⁹² However, it was the ‘neutral’ position not only of the state and ‘Crown’ but of the several representatives of the church that Newman had identified that further exacerbated the uneasiness and outrage of the remaining Tractarians.¹⁹³

All of this would have been considered earnestly by young Burne-Jones, who was learning more about the Thirty-Nine Articles and the complex ideas related to sacramentality, grace, and salvation. Burne-Jones’s active involvement in these debates reflected his deep investigation into the issues at hand. To defend his position, he would have needed to gain a firm knowledge of the ‘facts’ of the case, and thereafter, ‘know what to do with them’ in arguments he had with friends such as Dixon.¹⁹⁴ Versing himself in the ancient history of the church in the voluminous treatises and pamphlets of the Tractarians of this time, and of Newman just down the road in Birmingham, he would have been conversant on the points of sacramentality, the importance of the Thirty-Nine Articles, and the traditions handed down

¹⁹⁰ Pusey, *The Royal Supremacy*, 176.

¹⁹¹ Browne, *Annals of the Tractarian Movement*, 186.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Newman, *Certain Difficulties of Anglicans*, 350.

¹⁹⁴ Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, July 23, 1894, MS Add 54217, vol. 2, fol. 257-8, British Library.

through the ancient creeds of the church. Indeed, his was not just a romanticised, fleeting interest in Newman and Tractarian thought. Burne-Jones was developing convictions to defend what he saw as an ancient and sacred tradition.

Final Preparation for Oxford

This was also the year when he met yet another second-generation Oxford Movement figure – J.W. Caldicott, an ‘ardent Tractarian’ who was later to become head of Bristol Grammar School during a pivotal moment of its expansion.¹⁹⁵ Caldicott was an ‘old Birmingham school boy’ who had gone up to Pembroke College, Oxford, in 1846.¹⁹⁶ Under Caldicott’s guidance, Burne-Jones made his final serious efforts to prepare for Oxford, vigorously studying logic and metaphysics. While Crom Price would remember how fervently Burne-Jones devoted himself to the study of these topics, having a ‘perfect range of logic and metaphysics,’ Canon Dixon remembered how his books ‘seemed neater than others, and superior altogether. He used to bring up to class a copy of the *Corpus Poetarum Latinorum*, and another of the *Poetae Scenici Graeci*, which often made me envious, for it shewed his comprehensive spirit.’¹⁹⁷ Georgiana herself recalled how she ‘often heard him [Burne-Jones] say that he did all the reading on these subjects necessary for Oxford before he went there.’¹⁹⁸ In later years, Burne-Jones would even tell his studio assistant, Thomas Rooke how he had eagerly devoured all of Aquinas during these days.¹⁹⁹

Burne-Jones’s love of ancient Christianity put forward by the Tractarians was further deepened by a monumental visit to Mount St. Bernard, a Cistercian Monastery in Charnwood Forest. Through his childhood, he stayed at Harris Bridge every year with his Aunt and Uncle

¹⁹⁵ *Memorials*, 1:56-7.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ Cormell Price quoted by Georgiana, *Memorials*, 1:57; Canon Dixon to Georgiana, *Memorials*, 1:57.

¹⁹⁸ *Memorials*, 1:57

¹⁹⁹ Thomas Matthew Rooke, *Memoirs of Thomas Matthews Rooke: typescript: or Notes of conversations among the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, 1890-1899*, 28-9. MSL/1988/7 (Victoria and Albert Museum: National Art Archive), 65-66. See Chapter 5, ‘The Rooke Manuscript’.

Catherwood. In 1851, he ventured about eight miles away from their farm to make this visit to the monastery, which made an ‘impression’ on his mind that ‘nothing can exaggerate...the thought of it accompanied him through his whole life. Friends, wife, and children all knew the under-current longing in his soul for the rest and peace which he thought he had seen there that day.’²⁰⁰ In later years the memory of it had become ‘the dream which had walked step by step with him ever since, of some day leaving every one and everything and entering its doors and closing them behind him.’²⁰¹ At that point in his life, however, it was a door opening onto a way and ideal of life that led him to follow Newman, Goss, Caldicott, and the career of ministry to the University of Oxford.

At University

When Edward Burne-Jones matriculated in 1852, the University of Oxford was at a turning point in its history, with major changes made to the curriculum and its general atmosphere.²⁰² For the three decades at the beginning of the century, the church, state, and university were relatively steady allies, working together to maintain Anglican precedence over Catholics and Nonconformists.²⁰³ However, this dynamic began to change when Sir Robert Peel, one of Oxford’s three members of Parliament, top aide to the Prime Minister, successor to the conservative Charles Abbott, and former ‘darling of Christ Church [College],’ seemed to betray his ‘protestant principles’ and moved to support Roman Catholic

²⁰⁰ *Memorials*, 1:53.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² *University of Oxford Matriculation List* (1852), Oxford University Archives.

²⁰³ As Nockles argues, these elements of political theology from the eighteenth leading into the nineteenth century were significant in the formation of the Oxford Movement (as much as those like Pusey would later deny it) and the definition of sects within the Church of England following 1833. It is important to consider this background to understand the changes in the university and religious atmosphere leading up to Burne-Jones entrance in 1852 (*The Oxford Movement in Context*, 10; 60-3; 67-9); V.H.H. Green, *A History of Oxford University* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1974), 132-3.

Emancipation in the Relief Act of 1829²⁰⁴ – a move that led to him to lose his seat to the Evangelical Sir Robert Inglis.²⁰⁵ This began the series of conflicts between the university, its foundations in the church, and the government that contributed to disputes over reforms – with outside critics decrying the old, aristocratic and narrowly clerical system - and the eventual formation of the Tractarians in the 1830s. As previously mentioned, the Oxford Movement began with Keble’s Assize sermon, resisting the government’s reorganisation of church holdings and the Irish bishoprics. Further opposition from the movement was inspired by proposals in government to remove the obligatory declaration by all matriculating and graduating students of their allegiance to the Church of England’s Thirty-Nine Articles, and Lord Melbourne’s (failed) attempt to appoint a liberal, Dr. Hampden, to the Regius chair of divinity. Heated debates about the position of the church in society, its theological, doctrinal, and historical connection to the ‘one catholic’ church of the apostles, patristic writers, and the Elizabethan reforms of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries ensued alongside these attempts to reform, broaden, and, as the Tractarians feared, secularise and demean the church and its tradition. While 1845 saw the departure of several significant figures from the Oxford Movement – their leader John Henry Newman, most notably – the university was ‘confused’ and remained in a ‘daze.’²⁰⁶ The Evangelical Inglis was yet again elected in 1847 – a perceived victory for ‘liberalism’ – and a draft was put forward to add three new honours schools – natural science, law, and modern history - to the ‘Greats’ degree that had previously required only Classics and Mathematics. After years of intense discussion and debate, it was finally put into place in 1850. The same year a commission of enquiry was approved in the Commons. Resisted by the university board and the colleges, it eventually

²⁰⁴ Which, after George III’s use of the royal prerogative to block, was also deemed a ‘move against the monarch in his twin capacity as head of the church and the state’ (Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context*, 60).

²⁰⁵ Green, *A History of Oxford University*, 134.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 141-2.

led to the drafting of a bill by William Gladstone and the implementation of the University Reform Act in 1854, which in essence undermined the clerical nature and focus of college life in the common rooms with changes to the way fellowships were awarded, the colleges were governed, and how the three new schools were set up.²⁰⁷

Thus, the Oxford Burne-Jones walked into had undergone much change and turmoil in the years during and after his Tractarian heroes' battles. At that stage, he would have to undertake 'The Greats' – also called *Literae Humaniores* - in addition to either mathematics or one of three new honours school subjects.²⁰⁸ *The New Examination Statutes. Abstracts of their principal provisions, with a catalogue of books either expressly mentioned, or treating of the subjects required* (1852) lays out the structure of the examinations, which required at least a 'pass' to obtain the degree.²⁰⁹ Called 'the three public ordeals,' they consisted of the 'Responsions,' the First Public Examination, and the Public Examination (or 'The Second Public Examination'). These exams would have been written, rather than the oral examinations of an earlier period.²¹⁰ Burne-Jones sat the first two, completing the Responsions on 17 February 1853 and the first of the Public Examinations in 1854.²¹¹ Leaving without completing the degree, he did not take the final Public Examination. The Responsions was an entry-level exam, where the student could choose from a range of writers on logic and classics. Burne-Jones chose to write essays on Sophocles' *Ajax* and *Antigone*, on

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 132-149; For a comprehensive history of the University of Oxford in the nineteenth century, see M.G. Brock and M.C. Curthoys' *The History of the University of Oxford: Nineteenth-Century Oxford* vols. 6-7 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000).

²⁰⁸ This degree structure would remain only until 1864, when even more reforms were put into place and complicate our idea of what type of degree and coursework Burne-Jones would have undertaken. Isobel Hurst, 'Pater as Professional Classicist,' in *Pater the Classicist: Classical Scholarship, Reception and Asceticism* eds. Charles Martindale, Stefano Evangelista, and Elizabeth Prettejohn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

²⁰⁹ *New Examination Statutes. Abstracts of their principal provisions, with a catalogue of books either expressly mentioned, or treating of the subjects required* (Oxford: 1852).

²¹⁰ Green, *A History of Oxford University*, 137. Having written rather than oral examinations meant there was more emphasis on 'construction rather than construing.'

²¹¹ 'Examination Register: Responsions 1851-70,' UR 3/1/3/1, Oxford University Archives.

Euclid, and Virgil's *Georgics*.²¹² In the First Public Examination, Oxford required a demonstration of knowledge of all four Gospels in their original Greek, being encouraged in the *New Examination Statutes* to consult *Elsley's Annotations on Gospels and Acts, and Slades on the Epistles* (1841-6), Horne's *Introduction to the Critical Study of the Scriptures* (1846), *Harmonia Evangelica* (1845), and Parkhurst's Greek and English *Lexicon to the New Testament* (1851).²¹³

This is all confirmed by the contents of Burne-Jones's surviving notebooks, where there are extensive notes on details of the Gospels – particularly, Matthew – and even a comparative study for Mark and Luke that would serve as preparation for this examination.²¹⁴ These notebooks are handled only scantily by scholars of Burne-Jones and yet an assessment of them is crucial for understanding the intellectual formation of Burne-Jones.²¹⁵ They are important sources for considering a sample of academic work Burne-Jones encountered, and eventually, resisted. By giving an overview of the contents of these notebooks, we will continue to see the extent and nature of his study and mental framework.

A schedule at the beginning of the notebook lays out one term of lectures: on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday Burne-Jones had Logic at 9am, Demosthenes at 10am, and St. John at 11am; on Tuesday and Thursday he attended Latin and Greek verse at 9am, Greek chorus at 10am, Agamemnon at 11am, and Prose Composition at 1pm; and on Saturday, he went to a course entitled 'Essays.'²¹⁶ This shows the range of topics and skills related to higher classical education Burne-Jones would have had to develop at university. Within the

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ *New Examination Statutes* (1852), 2;33-4.

²¹⁴ Edward Burne-Jones, 'Notebooks from the University of Oxford,' 1070(1);(4) Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

²¹⁵ Colette Crossman begins an examination of these notebooks in her thesis. Crossman, 'Art as Lived Religion,' 68-71;94.

²¹⁶ Burne-Jones, 'Notebooks,' 1070(1).

notebooks, Burne-Jones's writings give us a sense of the theological coursework he was to focus on. Natural theology was prominent in the teaching and reading at Oxford at the time: classical authors like Aristotle (384-322 BCE) and modern thinkers such as John Stuart Mill (1806-73), Henry Aldrich (1648-1710), and Richard Whately (1787-1863) were scattered through his notes. Though deeming Mill 'heresy',²¹⁷ the names of the latter two Christian theologians appear more frequently in the arguments of his essays. Aldrich and Whately sought to frame Christianity in a logical and rational way, determining the nature of logic – as science or as art – and its role to defend the Christian faith, respectively.²¹⁸ Already studying ethics in 1853, by 1855 Burne-Jones was recorded as attending lectures on Moral Philosophy that fulfilled the honours stipulation that required two public lecture courses before the final Public Examination could be taken.²¹⁹ Here, Burne-Jones would be reading William Paley (1743-1805) and Bishop Joseph Butler (1692-1752), both of whom continued to use and develop evidences and proofs for miracles, relying on logic to uphold Christianity in light of its intrinsic moral philosophy.²²⁰ He could have consulted Paley's highly popular *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* (1785) and *A View of the Evidences of Christianity* (1794), and Butler's *Analogy of Religion* (1736).²²¹ In his notebooks, Burne-Jones would particularly cite Butler in his discussion on the 'world of grace and world of nature'.²²² One particular example shows how Burne-Jones began to digest and work out written answers to questions he might face in the examination. Following the authors on his Moral Philosophy course, he writes: 'The duration of God's dominion must be Eternal, if anything which is to be

²¹⁷ Edward Burne-Jones to Frances Horner, n.d., Burne-Jones Papers, XXVII, fol. 72, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

²¹⁸ Aldrich's major text, was the *Arts Logicae Rudimenta* (1691), which would have been read by Burne-Jones in its 1847 edition edited by Reverend Longueville Mansels, and Whately's, *Elements of Logic* (1826).

²¹⁹ 'Certificate of Attendance for Moral Philosophy,' 1855, Oxford University Archives.

²²⁰ Burne-Jones, 'Notebooks,' 1070(1);(4).

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

immortal. For, being every thing is therefore his, because received from him as the first production; it followeth, that so long as it continued it must be his and consequently being some of his creatures are immortal, his dominion must be eternal.²²³

Though he attended a whole host of lectures, these notes on subjects taken in Trinity Term of 1853 evidence an increased boredom with his subject.²²⁴ While he religiously devotes himself to listing the nuances of Old Testament sacrifices in classes on Leviticus and Deuteronomy, and maps out the logic of Socrates with particular care, other pages feature more images than words - doodles that caricature and mock the studious, bearded profiles of his lecturers.²²⁵ Overall, he was ‘disappointed’ with a curriculum which featured not only the aforementioned standards of reading in logic and theology but also supplementary material such as the *Graves Lectures on the Four Last Books of Pentateuch* (1850) and *Synchronistical Annals of the Kings of Israel and Judah* (1843), translations of Greek and Latin, and essays comparing Platonist ideals to Aristotelian ones.²²⁶

It was not as if these subjects in themselves were too difficult, and therefore, boring, for Burne-Jones. Indeed, we must remember he had done much of the required reading before going up for Oxford and devoured some of the most complex metaphysical texts he could get his hands on. Instead, it was the tone and method of teaching and learning that had disappointed him, so different was it from his experience with such a gifted teacher such as Abraham Kerr Thompson, of his own penchant for independent learning and debate, and, above all, his expectations of inspiring, controversial Tractarian tutors and lecturers. ‘As to

²²³ Burne-Jones, “Notebook” 1070(4); Another essay in the notebook featured a similar topic that follows upon the ontological argument of St. Anselm: ‘existence is necessary to perfection, and perfection is implied in our notion of the Deity, the Deity necessarily exists.’

²²⁴ Burne-Jones, “Notebooks,” 1070(1).

²²⁵ Burne-Jones, “Notebooks,” 1070(1); (4).

²²⁶ *Memorials* 1:71; *New Examination Statutes*, 34.

divinity,' Burne-Jones would later tell his son Philip as he too began coursework at Oxford 'They have an unlucky way of making one learn the Jewish history in any clumsy, crabbed, ill-written, dry book they can get made for money, rather than teach it out of the wonderful ancient book itself, and I expect it is that which hinders you.'²²⁷ This unimaginative, wholly logical, and rational approach to his beloved world of the Bible seemed to be of no use to his ultimate aim to be a priest. It was also Morris's and Burne-Jones's aversion to 'transcendentalism and all the hosts of German systems,' as Burne-Jones told Cornell Price, that helped along their aspirations to abandon their studies and begin a monastery in London.²²⁸ Very much in the tone of Newman, Burne-Jones wrote to Cornell Price: the 'multitude is moved by passion and feeling and not reason, therefore you must impel them by Rhetoric before you can convince them with Logic.'²²⁹

This sense of boredom led to his increased involvement in the college common room circles of Exeter and Pembroke, with William Morris, who was to be his closest friend and artistic colleague for life, and Edwin Hatch, whose diaries from the later years of Burne-Jones's time at Oxford give us a picture of what the growing group was like.²³⁰ The near daily one-line summaries from Hatch, a future minister whose entries were to diminish greatly once he entered the church officially, recount innumerable walks, visits to churches and lovely evenings of common room mealtime conversation with Morris, Burne-Jones, Swinburne, and others.²³¹ Even though there are no details about the specifics of these

²²⁷ *Memorials*, 2:89.

²²⁸ Burne-Jones to Cornell Price, Aug. 5, 1853 (fol. 8, MS Save 1661, Yale Center for British Art), quoted by Crossman, 'Art as Lived Religion,' 72.

²²⁹ Burne-Jones to Cornell Price, Oct. 29, 1854 (fol. 5, MS Save 1661, Yale Center for British Art), quoted by Crossman, 72; Compare this language to that of Newman on revelation and reason (Ker, *John Henry Newman*, 122;260).

²³⁰ Diaries of Edwin Hatch, 1858-86 Pembroke College Archive, PMB/V/2/12/1; In the *Memorials*, Georgina further clarifies Burne-Jones's membership to 'the old set of 1855' – through Hatch, Burne-Jones was introduced to "Swinburne of Balliol" (1:163).

²³¹ Unfortunately, no exact details of the conversations are recorded, only the meeting itself.

conversations and adventures, the brief entries show us the circle with which Burne-Jones had almost daily interactions, evidence of frequent lively conversations, and walking trips, most often, to churches. In this company, Burne-Jones was inspired to continue and pursue his extra-curricular education.

Further, it was said that he ‘devoured’ books like the recent Catholic convert Robert Isaac Wilberforce’s (1802-1857) *Holy Eucharist* at meal times, and glowingly remembers attending a lecture on justification given by E.B. Pusey, who had recently himself emerged from a great controversy surrounding his defence of the doctrine of the Holy Presence in the eucharist.²³² These texts and controversies in themselves are important to consider, making a formative impact on how Burne-Jones would have conceived of sacramentality and its relation to art. For at the same time he was reading these texts and attending these lectures of his particular preference, he was also attending mass at St. Thomas the Martyr, a Tractarian stronghold where he sang Gregorian chant alongside Morris and participated in a highly elaborate liturgy around the eucharist.²³³ It would have been an important visual and physical connection to the defence made by Wilberforce and Pusey of the eucharist in the mass.

The Holy Eucharist

By examining not only the text but the controversies surrounding the Tractarian view of the ‘Holy Eucharist’ here, we can begin to understand an aspect of how Burne-Jones came to deeper knowledge of sacramentality, the ancient history and tradition of the church, and the subtle, intricate layers of Tractarian theology that suggest a new understanding of Burne-

²³² *Memorials*, 1:89-90; Robert Wilberforce, *The Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist* (London: John and Charles Mozley, 1853); E.B. Pusey, *Justification: A Sermon Preached Before the University at S. Mary’s, on the 24th Sunday after Trinity, 1853* (Oxford: J.H. Parker, 1853).

²³³ ‘St Thomas the Martyr, Oxford’, The Church of England: A Church Near You, accessed 11 April, 2019 <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/214/page/37/view/>; Burne-Jones to Cornell Price, May 1, 1853 (fol. 2, MS Save 1661, Yale Center for British Art) quoted by Crossman, ‘Art as Lived Religion,’ 301; MacCarthy, *The Last Pre-Raphaelite*, 48.

Jones's thinking and development. The eucharistic theology Burne-Jones would have encountered was integrated into many aspects of Tractarian theology. As previously introduced in the summary of Newman's views in the University Sermons, the incarnation of Christ – an ever-present reality of the lived faith since apostolic times – informed each element of life.²³⁴ Newman, as a Roman Catholic convert in Birmingham, would develop this further and preach about the actualisation of this incarnational theology in the eucharist when the bread and wine were consecrated at the pinnacle of the mass.²³⁵

In the years leading up to the Tractarian movement, there was a 'near consensus' in the Church of England, with two camps of interpretation – the 'virtualists' and the 'receptionists.'²³⁶ The former believed that the elements – the bread and the wine – were not really physically the body and blood of Lord Jesus Christ after consecration, but 'became so in *virtue*, power and effect'; not containing the Real Presence but conveying it through and in consecration.²³⁷ On the other hand, the receptionists thought the Real Presence was 'subject to the worthiness of the recipient,' rather than in the virtue of the consecrated elements themselves.²³⁸ While early Tracts from the Oxford Movement thinkers did not arouse much suspicion in the early 1830s, Froude held more 'advanced views' that influenced Newman to consider a more 'objective' or 'local' eucharistic presence that continued to underline the objectivity of the sacrament in its own right as a lived and real institution made available by Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection.²³⁹ The divergence between Tractarian and previous 'High Church' views became most contentious in 1843, when Pusey was suspended

²³⁴ See Chapter 1, 'John Henry Newman'.

²³⁵ See, for example, John Henry Newman, 'Sermon 12. The Gospel Feast,' *Parochial and Plain Sermons* vol. 7, 160-177 and 'Sermon 12. Profession without Ostentation,' *Parochial and Plain Sermons* vol. 1, 152-164.

²³⁶ Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context*, 235;236.

²³⁷ *Ibid*, 237.

²³⁸ *Ibid*.

²³⁹ *Ibid*, 239.

from preaching at the University for two years after he gave what was deemed a controversial Romanist sermon entitled ‘The Holy Eucharist, A Comfort to the Penitent.’²⁴⁰ The Tractarians thereafter placed themselves at odds with the rest of the church on this matter, with Pusey and his supporters calling the older, supposedly ‘low and rationalizing’ virtualist *and* receptionist positions into question.²⁴¹ Pusey himself would be defending these views for at least a decade after, giving another sermon entitled ‘The Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist’²⁴² that Burne-Jones perhaps had at least come across and read - if he had not heard the sermon itself - since he had also attended Pusey’s lecture on justification and had read Wilberforce.²⁴³

The debacle surrounding Pusey’s exposition on the eucharist serves to exemplify the touchy nature of the subject. In retrospect, Pusey declared that his intention was ‘not to *teach* the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist, but rather, assuming the doctrine of the Church of England to be identical (as I believe it to be) with that of the Fathers, to present that doctrine in one aspect as “as comfort to the penitent”....on the exceeding greatness of the Gift which is thus conveyed to the soul...through that sacrament.’²⁴⁴ After living with scripture and the patristic writers, ‘its deepest expositors,’ only so to speak more confidently in tune with the church’s tradition, he had been surprised and ‘pained’ by the unexpected resistance.²⁴⁵ Thus, Tractarians like Pusey saw the sacramental mysteries of the eucharist handed down through the apostolic life and therefore a fundamental part of the maintenance of the Anglican tradition.

²⁴⁰ E.B. Pusey, *The Holy Eucharist, A Comfort to the Penitent* (1843)
<http://anglicanhistory.org/pusey/pusey4.html>.

²⁴¹ Pusey, *The Holy Eucharist*, 241.

²⁴² E.B. Pusey, *The Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. A Sermon* (Oxford, 1853).

²⁴³ *Memorials*, 1:89.

²⁴⁴ Pusey, *The Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist*, iii.

²⁴⁵ Pusey, ‘Preface,’ *The Holy Eucharist*.

From the beginning of the sermon, Pusey ‘conveyed the belief that the elements remain in their natural substances’ at the same time they were ‘truly and really, yet spiritually and in an ineffable way, His Body and Blood’.²⁴⁶ The fact that Pusey had withheld his thoughts on ‘the *mode* of the great mystery’ so to instead understand it “‘as a Mystery,’” and ‘to “adore it”’ with the ‘unknowing knowledge of faith’ aroused the suspicion of more moderate Anglicans, since he had made these statements without specifically denouncing the Roman Catholic view of transubstantiation.²⁴⁷ Later, Pusey would go extra steps to further clarify this experience of the sacramental grace of Christ through his presence in the eucharist – ‘a Presence without us, not within us only...termed sacramental...as opposed *not* to what is real, but what is natural.’²⁴⁸ ‘And since we receive them’ he said, ‘they must be there, in order that we may receive them.’²⁴⁹ Quoting extensively from the patristic writers, he continually underlines this fact and its reliance on the whole system of grace through Christ, His death, and body and blood in the sacraments that had made such an impact on Burne-Jones in the sermon that we know he had attended on justification. In that sermon, Pusey explained that neither works nor faith counted – ‘the source of the sinner’s acceptance is outside of himself...it *is* the mercy of God and Jesus Christ’ so that ‘all, in approaching the Holy Mysteries of His Body and Blood, say to God, in the words of the prophet Daniel, “we do not presume to come before Thee, trusting in our own righteousness, but in Thy manifold

²⁴⁶ Pusey, ‘Preface,’ *The Holy Eucharist*.

²⁴⁷ Ibid; Pusey, *The Presence of Christ*, 21. In his sermon on justification that Burne-Jones would have attended in 1853, Pusey continues on the idea of understanding: ‘It is easy to select hard and technical sayings on the one side or on the other; it is easy to find sayings which deny the value of works wrought through the grace of Christ, or which exaggerate them. It is easy to misunderstand, hard to understand unless we love. For unless we love, we do not wish to understand. It is easy to distort, hard to see aright, unless we wish to see one another, and one another’s meaning, in the light and truth and love of God’ (*Justification*, 41).

²⁴⁸ Pusey, *The Presence of Christ*, 21-22.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, 22.

and great mercies” claiming not ‘for ourselves or our past deserts, His presence in His Sacraments.’²⁵⁰

This structure of the sacrament, of reserve, of mystery, and of self-sacrifice and humility founded upon ‘faith and works’ that are a ‘compound whole, just as the body and soul of one living man’— upon the ‘natural elements’ that are literally, spiritually, ineffably the very same ‘Body and Blood’ and presence of Christ – suggests a metaphysical system which could lay behind Burne-Jones’s budding understanding of the creative enterprise and his reverence of the mystery and later pursuit of it in the artistic medium.²⁵¹ His attraction to Wilberforce’s *Holy Eucharist* and other instances of theological and intellectual engagement, such as the choice of church and friendships in common rooms, imply this interest, or at least, an intense curiosity. As an intricate treatise on the eucharist, Wilberforce’s massive text maps out differences between Calvinist and ancient ‘catholic’ theology; the necessity of the act and mode of consecration and therefore, the priesthood;²⁵² continued Scriptural references to the presence of Christ that is ‘real, not just symbolical’, ‘supernatural, not natural’²⁵³; its relation to the workings of the Holy Spirit;²⁵⁴ the act as an eternal sacrifice that overrides and fulfils all other prefigural Old Testament rites;²⁵⁵ and its liturgical implications and benefits to the recipient,²⁵⁶ all while making a constant appeal to the testimony of the apostles and the Church Fathers. These processes of mysterious exchange between God and Man, in the incarnation and the sacraments, would have not only strengthened his Tractarian conviction for the mass, its history, and all rituals of reverence and worship surrounding it but his *visual* understanding of the Word made Flesh – idea become real, ‘not just symbolical’. Newman’s

²⁵⁰ Pusey, *Justification*, 21;38.

²⁵¹ *Ibid*, 28.

²⁵² Wilberforce, *The Holy Eucharist*, 8-16.

²⁵³ *Ibid*, 152-270.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 312.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 347-392.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 394-427.

‘advanced’ and Roman Catholic views, the controversies surrounding Pusey’s eucharistic discussions, and the influence of Wilberforce’s text (and soon after, Wilberforce’s own conversion to Rome) on Burne-Jones should not be dismissed or downplayed, either for their potential consequences on his immediate career choices or the subtle implications for the way he was to conceive his art.²⁵⁷

Charles Marriott: A Meeting at St. Mary’s

These readings and incidences coincided with a major turning point in his life when, in 1854, he was ‘ready to silence questions and accept the tenets of the elder Church *en bloc*’ so to follow Newman and Wilberforce out of the Anglican Church.²⁵⁸ Acceptance of the ‘tenets of the elder Church’ may not seem totally at odds with his previous love of the Tractarian desire to connect the Anglican Church with the ancient ‘catholicity’ of the ‘one’ faith of the apostles and patristic writers. However, his admiration for Newman and his own studies – personal and academic – had led to his disenchantment with this vision of the Church of England that for Newman did not hold up when more deeply investigated. Newman’s years of study led him to the conclusion that the Roman Catholic Church could be the only successor of that ‘elder’ Church in its entirety, so at odds was the Anglican Church at that point with the ideal of the universal ancient tradition.²⁵⁹ There could be no ‘*via media*’, as Newman had originally proposed, but only the ‘Development of Doctrine’ that began, was sustained, and remained in the traditions of Rome.²⁶⁰ This, Georgiana indicates, was Burne-

²⁵⁷ See Chapter 2, ‘Secret of the Marriage of the Lamb’.

²⁵⁸ *Memorials*, 1:99.

²⁵⁹ Knight, *The Church in the Nineteenth Century*, 16; Robinson, *In No Strange Land*, 159; Pearce, ‘Tradition and Conversion,’ 186.

²⁶⁰ The ‘Via Media,’ was the subject of Tract 90, making the case that the Anglican tradition at its height balanced the evils of Protestantism and Romanism respectively to maintain and sustain the ancient Apostolic tradition. This was a problematic proposition, and later, as a newly converted Catholic, Newman would argue for the Roman Catholic ‘development of doctrine’ in a book by that name (1845). Newman, ‘Tract 90: The Via Media’ *Tracts for the Times* (1834) (*Project Canterbury*); Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845) (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1909).

Jones's own conclusion, as she recounts that by that time, many friends remembered him as 'too Catholic to be ordained'.²⁶¹ Struggling with the lacklustre elements of his curriculum and considering more deeply the debates surrounding the sacraments, Burne-Jones could have been wrestling with the prospect of leaving the Anglican Church entirely like Newman. This was an act that would have likened him to the state of a 'traitor' – pamphlets, caricatures, and the theological treatises of Tractarian opponents warned of 'popery' and its heretical, foreign dangers.

Burne-Jones would seek the audience of Charles Marriott, 'Newman's old friend and disciple...the learned and saintly' man who succeeded Newman as Vicar of St. Mary's.²⁶² Editor of the vast Tractarian project, the *Library of the Fathers*, Marriott has not been investigated much in relation to Burne-Jones, despite his presence at this pivotal moment in his life. Here this dissertation accesses and analyses letters and writings of Marriott to consider more deeply and originally the encounter.

Marriott was known as a man with 'the spirit of a disciple,' possessing a deep sense of 'sacrifice'; a 'metaphysical thinker' who was conversely an 'awkward speaker' more keen to serve his leader, mentor, and precedent, Newman, or to give long private counsels to anyone who sought him.²⁶³ Despite his intense devotion to Newman, he stood firm in the cause of Tractarianism and the Anglican Church, committed completely to making the case for the apostolic succession within its history and its revival in the present.

... though I may be suspected, hampered, worried, and perhaps actually persecuted, I will fight every inch of ground before I will be compelled to forsake the service of that Mother to whom I owe my new Birth in CHRIST, and the milk of His Word. I will not forsake her at any man's bidding till she

²⁶¹ *Memorials*, 1:109.

²⁶² *Ibid*, 1:99.

²⁶³ Church, *The Oxford Movement: Twelve Years 1833-1845*, 79-91.

herself rejects me; nor will I believe, till there is no alternative (which GOD forbid should ever be!), that she has fallen as she herself tells me she *may* fall.²⁶⁴

Met with Burne-Jones's disillusionment, Marriott would have been a firm and steady, passionate and reasoned voice in tune with the student's own passions, rationale, and goals. From letters Marriott had written to friends, family, and colleagues in the days and years after Newman's conversion in 1845, we get a sense that Marriott faced young, inquiring, uncertain but passionate men like Burne-Jones routinely. In these epistles, Marriott rehearses and justifies a potential response Burne-Jones might have received. He felt hopeful, he said to his aunt Mrs. G.W. Marriott, when he saw 'the sight of such young men as is, signing up around us.

They are a cheering sign for the coming year, and one that we need much...I quite agree with you that the less young men's minds are excited and disturbed at present the better it is for them. But in the present course of events we cannot keep questions from coming before them and therefore I don't think silence the safest course of speech of contested matters...[I speak with them] as calmly as I can, and always with a view to draw the mind rather to practice...rather than to draw them to debates. This is very difficult as things stand right now, but it is hardly possible to have a stranger feeling than I have of the necessity of pursuing such a course. And the more [I am concerned with] anyone's welfare, and the more intimate to my communication with him, the more chance I have of being able to draw him off controversy, and towards the great matters of Christian life. I think I can honestly say that....To depart from this purpose would be to overthrow the whole object of my life in the university and in the Church, which is not to agitate, but to build up.²⁶⁵

Georgiana recalled that the interview with Marriott gave Burne-Jones 'some relief,' indicating Burne-Jones's sympathetic stance to the thoughts of Marriott. However, Marriott's enthusiasm and dedication could not prevent Burne-Jones from feeling that 'his whole-

²⁶⁴ To Sir J.W. Awry, 20 February 1845. Charles Marriott's letters, Pusey House; Also quoted by John William Burgon, *Lives of 12 Good Men* vol. 1, 4th ed. (London: John Murray, 1889), 316.

²⁶⁵ Letter to aunt, Mrs. G.W. Marriott, October 12-13, 1845. Marriott papers, Box 1, Pusey House Library.

hearted enthusiastic and unenquiring days were gone.’²⁶⁶ At this point, Burne-Jones was coming to the realisation that he would not stay and commit himself to be an Anglican minister. Burne-Jones would later remember in a conversation to his studio assistant, Thomas Rooke: ‘If you’d seen at college the sort of material that was being made into parsons there, you would have small respect for the cloth, I can tell you.’ ‘Then,’ noted Rooke, ‘followed stories of scrapes [sic] they got into and out of.’²⁶⁷

Indeed, it was not the Evangelical or even traditional wing of Anglicanism that brought down the Oxford Movement, which was on an upswing in numbers even after Newman’s departure in 1845 and into the 1850s.²⁶⁸ It was in the middle and later years of the 1850s, into the 1860s and 1870s, that the ritualist movement began to popularise the medieval forms of the mass for the sake of decadence and performance rather than for the sake of sacrament and the doctrines of ‘Beauty and Severity’ once upheld by Newman and then defended by Pusey and his followers.²⁶⁹ Further, the university curriculum was seen with increased suspicion by Tractarian educators, who believed that while the university training at Oxford or Cambridge was necessary for the ministry, it was not enough. This led to the founding of places like Chichester Theological College in 1838, where Marriott was first Principal, to address this issue up front, as well as an increased number of educational editions and pamphlets on Tractarian parochial practices.²⁷⁰ This helps to explain why we

²⁶⁶ *Memorials*, 1:99.

²⁶⁷ Thomas Matthew Rooke, *Memoirs of Thomas Matthews Rooke: typescript : or Notes of conversations among the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, 1890-1899*, 28-9. MSL/1988/7. Victoria and Albert Museum: National Art Archive. See Chapter 5, ‘The Rooke Manuscript,’ 205.

²⁶⁸ Herring, *The Oxford Movement in Practice*, 35-9;46. After the departure of Newman and others in 1845 and the Gorham Judgment in 1850, the Movement was ‘expected to decline between 1846-55. On the contrary, however, the number of those ordained rose to 215, a figure almost equaled in the following decade’ (46).

²⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 89.

²⁷⁰ Church, *The Oxford Movement: Twelve Years 1833-1845*, 86; Herring, *The Oxford Movement in Practice*, 27;61;63; W.R. Ward, in ‘From Tractarians to the Executive Commission, 1845-54,’ also describes how ‘High Churchmen, led by Charles Marriott, fellow of Oriel and former Principal of Chichester Theological College, sought to develop the proposal [reforms to the University in the Executive Commission] in their own way. The Tractarians had roseate views of both colleges and the poor scholars they claimed colleges had originally

simply cannot consider Burne-Jones's attraction to Tractarianism 'secondary' to some ulterior motive or desire. His studies and subsequent departure from religious education was not just a disillusionment with what had been a fashion or fad.²⁷¹ These facts also continue to reinforce that Burne-Jones and Morris were not alone in their dissatisfaction with the university, and ultimately illuminates confusing remarks Burne-Jones makes in his later life about religious sects and establishments.²⁷² If we see these concerns in light of this more complicated, embattled, and embittered over-lapping history of disputes, where Burne-Jones and his faith has fallen in the middle of it all, we can begin to view Burne-Jones's distress in 1854 and his turn to a career in art with deeper understanding.

A Trip to France and 'The Day of Judgment'

The following year, Burne-Jones left England for the first time on a momentous summer walking trip around France, travelling with William Morris and fellow university student William Fulford. The grand cathedrals of the North and the galleries of Paris were to make an everlasting impact on him. Besides over twenty architecturally stunning smaller churches of the passing towns and villages, the group toured nine cathedrals in all, following John Ruskin's footsteps in *The Stones of Venice*, reading poetry by Keats, and Burne-Jones, sketching from the outset. The 'hour' Burne-Jones spent in 'Paradise' at Hereford in 1849

intended to serve. Colleges were the Anglican answer to Roman Catholic monasteries; they were anti-professorial, and provided tutors with a pastoral vocation. A new college might inculcate the catholic virtues of poverty and obedience, and offer an alternative to the liberal faith in free trade in talent. In Pusey's imagination the poor scholars came increasingly to figure as the *paupers Christi*, 'the very wealth of the university, of the state and of the church.' On this basis Gladstone, Sir. John Taylor Coleridge and others become interested in the idea in the summer of 1845...Suffice it to say that Marriott felt bound to work for a college...Pusey and Marriott came round to defending the status quo...At bottom, Pusey felt that the literary heritage of the Catholic past was the sole defence of faith and morals against the destructive modernisms of the day. Magnifying the personal instruction of professors was in principle idolatry. Professors would do only for science, which amounted to the purveying of facts, but not for liberal education' (W.R. Ward, 'From Tractarians to the Executive Commission, 1845-54,' in *History of the University of Oxford in the Nineteenth Century*, 310).

²⁷¹ Christian and Wildman, *Edward Burne-Jones: Victorian Artist-Dreamer*, 45.

²⁷² See Chapter 5, 'The Rooke Manuscript'.

was further developed into ‘the Day of Judgment’ at Beauvais, ‘the most beautiful church in the world’:

I remember it all – and the processions – and the trombones – and the ancient singing – more beautiful than anything I had ever heard and I think I have never heard the like since. And the great organ that made the air tremble – and the greater organ that pealed out suddenly, and I thought the Day of Judgment had come – and the roof, and the long lights that are the most graceful things man has ever made.

What a day it was, and how alive I was, and young – and a blue dragon-fly stood still in the air so long that I could have painted him... Yes, if I took account of my life and the days in it that most went to make me, the Sunday at Beauvais would be the first day of creation.²⁷³

By journey’s end, Burne-Jones and Morris both had finally decided a formal career in the ministry was not their path. ‘We resolved definitely that we would begin a life of art, and put off our decision no longer – he should be an architect and I a painter,’ Burne-Jones would later tell Georgiana.²⁷⁴ However, if we consider his formative experience at Hereford against that recalled here at Beauvais, this is not a radical change – Burne-Jones himself recalls that it had been building up for some time before.²⁷⁵ Instead, there is a natural connection between theology and aesthetic, between experience and intellect and worship, that takes shape as the firm foundation for the work Burne-Jones would pursue in his initial artistic studies and in his mature career as a successful and prolific professional artist.

²⁷³ *Memorials*, 1:113-4.

²⁷⁴ *Memorials*, 1:114-5.

²⁷⁵ *Memorials*, 1:115.

Chapter 2. Time of Transition: The Marriage of the Lamb

This is the first of two chapters detailing Burne-Jones's transition from theology to art. Considering the previous narrative on Burne-Jones's theological formation, I argue in this chapter for a continuation of certain theological ideas in and through his early artistic projects. I will directly question how that time studying theology transfers into pieces of early artworks – several works from William Morris's Red House, including a fresco of Sir Degrevant and a cabinet decorated with 'The Prioress's Tale', Annunciation designs for churches, and a privately commissioned painting, *The Blessed Damozel*. These works will be examined alongside analysis of an article written by Burne-Jones. In fact, both this and the following chapter will be centred on the two largely unexamined articles Burne-Jones wrote for the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* at this pivotal point of transition in 1856. This chapter will introduce the magazine and begin by interpreting his earliest publication, an article on William Makepeace Thackeray's novel, *The Newcomes*. Examining this article will allow us to begin to understand the theological language – written and visual – at work in Burne-Jones's conception for, and work in, art. These next two chapters do not seek to explore the elements of his early artistic education. Rather, I will question how the extensive theological background laid out in Chapter 1 can be carried forward into the forging of his artist project. It is this use of a theological frame of mind that will be highlighted in his early work.

'Our Little Brotherhood'

'...We have such a deal to tell people, such a deal of scolding to administer, so many fights to wage and opposition to encounter that our spirits are quite rising with the emergency,' Burne-Jones feverishly wrote to cousin Maria Choyce upon their return from

France in 1855.²⁷⁶ Driven by fresh excitement to pursue an artistic career, a ministry in art instead of the church, an ‘exclusive Brotherhood of seven’ Oxford and Cambridge students was formed. This included William Morris, William Fulford, Richard Watson Dixon, Wilfrid Heeley, Henry MacDonal, Vernon Lushington, and Burne-Jones, with ‘Mr. Morris’ as the proprietor over them all.²⁷⁷ They were directly emulating the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and their *Germ* magazine, which had already been read by eager Burne-Jones and his six other friends. ‘We may do a world of good,’ Burne-Jones continued to Maria. ‘For we start from new principles and those of the strongest kind, and are full of enthusiasm as the first crusaders, and we may perish in a year as others have done before.’²⁷⁸

The group of young men were a close-knit group with shared backgrounds, ideals, and paths for the future. Heeley and the Lushington brothers were the only Cambridge men, and, besides Morris and Faulkner, they had all begun their academic journey at King Edward’s School, Birmingham. Faulkner was the only one of the group who had entered college without ambitions for the ministry – all the rest had originally started their university lives with dreams of joining the clergy.²⁷⁹ The magazine went through 1856, running out of necessary funds as individual members began to go their separate ways. During its year-long publication of twelve issues, it sought, as Dixon would describe, to disseminate ‘the ideals and principles of art which had now become well-fixed among us...to advocate moral earnestness and purpose in literature, art and society’ based ‘largely on Mr. Ruskin’s

²⁷⁶ *Memorials* 1:121.

²⁷⁷ Ibid; Morris would hand over the editor’s position to Fulford after the February issue (P.C. Fleming, ed., ‘*The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*,’ *Rossetti Archive* accessed 18 June 2018, <http://www.rossettiarchive.org/docs/ap4.o93.raw.html>). There were also additions by Cornell Price, a young Georgiana (the only female contributor), and Vernon’s twin brother, Godfrey.

²⁷⁸ *Memorials* 1:123-4.

²⁷⁹ P.C. Fleming, ed., ‘*The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*,’ *Rossetti Archive*, accessed 18 June 2018, <http://www.rossettiarchive.org/docs/ap4.o93.raw.html>.

teaching’ – the very teachings that had led Morris, Burne-Jones, and Fulford on their pilgrimage to French cathedrals the year before.²⁸⁰

Burne-Jones wrote two fictional tales and two articles in the first few editions of the magazine: in the first issue, ‘The Cousins – A Tale...by me’ and ‘The Newcomes...by me’; and in the second, ‘A Northern Tale’ with plans to do an article on Ruskin in March and one on Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué in April.²⁸¹ While his article on Ruskin did not appear until April and the piece on Fouqué never materialized,²⁸² these four pieces are important examples of his transition from theology to art; his use of theological ideas and language in the world of art to do ‘a world of good’.²⁸³ In this chapter and the next, we shall focus specifically on his articles rather than his works of fiction so as to tease out theological arguments he makes for art. This will allow us to see the theology at work in his art early and, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, later in his career.

A Godly Crusade

These two reviews suggest a fresh way to examine Burne-Jones’s intellectual position. Unlike William Morris, who would himself write and publish profusely on art, its purpose, and the cause and vision of socialism, Burne-Jones has little to no enthusiasm for writing or speaking in a public way. He does not seek to verbally publish and promote the political or religious purpose of his art, and even in his private correspondence, as extensive as it is, he most often prefers mystery and evasion, suggestion and obliqueness, when it comes to his personal and professional vision of art and religion.²⁸⁴ His pieces in *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* present an opportunity unusual in the context of the rest of his life,

²⁸⁰ Richard Watson Dixon, quoted by Florence S. Boos, “‘A Holy Warfare against an Age’: Essays and Tales of the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*” *Victorian Periodicals Review* 47 no. 3 (Fall 2014): 344.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 122.

²⁸² Boos observes, however, that Burne-Jones’s ‘A Tale of the North,’ echoes Fouqué’s stories of ‘adventure and sublimation’ (*Ibid.*, 356).

²⁸³ *Memorials* 1:123-4.

²⁸⁴ See Chapter 5, ‘The Rooke Manuscript’.

as he here wrestles with words rather than images. Shrouded, as it were, behind the subjects and work of other authors, Burne-Jones's *Oxford and Cambridge* reviews nevertheless indicate some questions and ideas of his own at this point in his life as he stands between the study of theology and the study of art. In his attempt to 'point out the chief moral design' of *The Newcomes*, Burne-Jones poses themes and issues that potentially complicate our view of his early studies both in theology and art, and the possibility that they may have interesting and subtle interrelations and consequences for his later career.²⁸⁵

From the outset, Burne-Jones situates Thackeray and *The Newcomes* in the context of its critics, and so doing forms an initial argument in which Burne-Jones himself criticizes the current state of religion, politics, and the church in society.²⁸⁶ Thus, in the review of a modern-life novel, where we might expect the discussion more of domestic and secular issues, Burne-Jones uses theological issues and language from the outset. Thackeray, Burne-Jones argues, presents 'a wonderfully faithful picture' of the world, and rather than listening 'reverently,' it is this 'testimony against ourselves in the mouth of a brother' that causes the text to be used '*in perpetuum* for gravest homilies upon evil speaking, satire, and slander'.²⁸⁷ 'Indignant' at seeing 'their Church confessions of unworthiness' presented as 'not improbable', critical readers and general society show themselves 'committed to a sham worship'.²⁸⁸ Having encountered the disappointment with his curriculum and the counsel of Marriott, Burne-Jones writes with inspiration renewed from his experience of art and religion in French cathedrals and churches. Beauvais, much like 'Paradise' in Hereford, was the 'first day of creation', and now, yet unable to fully pursue his artistic expression, he reflects upon questions raised by his previous theological study, his problems with the church, and the role

²⁸⁵ Burne-Jones, *The Newcomes*, 55.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 50-51.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 50-1.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 50.

of art.²⁸⁹ His language is infused with artistic, literary, and religious principles; with a skepticism of modern history that implicitly comingles the influence of Newman, Carlyle, and Ruskin, Burne-Jones looks upon Enlightenment, ‘sick to death of unbelief, and doubtings of their unbelief, and questionings,’ and the sudden the ‘birth’ of novel writing in ‘revolution’ and Romanticism, ‘when men believing nothing else, yet believed they felt’.²⁹⁰ In this review, the general style of Burne-Jones is long-winded and sermonizing, betraying his youth in the complex and yet often clotted passages of mixed tenses and layered clauses. Already he shows his penchant for the visual as he heavily relies on descriptive imagery to make his case.²⁹¹

Taught by Newman to ‘scorn every thing that was not his dream’ and guided by Ruskin into the realms of the visual art,²⁹² Burne-Jones’s initial discussion of Thackeray could be seen as not particularly related to Thackeray but beginning to show the matrix of ideas Burne-Jones is sifting through, retaining, and adding. Burne-Jones himself disappears in the piece insofar as he does not recommend for himself any particular claim to originality in his review of *The Newcomes* and survey of history at the broadest – perhaps this is what complicates and clouds our current view of the article’s usefulness for understanding Burne-Jones. Nevertheless, it is in the complex interrelations of ideas underneath the umbrella of Thackeray’s novel, Burne-Jones begins to paint his own picture of an art and life indistinct from theological thinking and religious purpose; an indistinction that may appear to disappear in the general sense of mystery and longing for beauty that is at the surface of Burne-Jones’s artwork and personal correspondence about his artwork in his mature life. Condemning the descent of the novel into ‘false idealism’ after the height of the romantic period in Goethe,

²⁸⁹ *Memorials*, 1:113-4.

²⁹⁰ Burne-Jones, *The Newcomes*, 51.

²⁹¹ *Ibid*, 50.

²⁹² *Memorials*, 1:59. See Chapter 1, ‘John Henry Newman’.

Burne-Jones declares, 'Oh! life and reality, shall we ever know them as they are?'²⁹³

Stimulated by *The Newcomes*, this is the question that remains with him the rest of the review.

Before Burne-Jones proceeds into the heart of his consideration of the novel itself, he considers genius and its 'manifestation'.²⁹⁴ Insofar as 'the dark wisdom' of life and reality in truth are 'far withdrawn from us at the feet of God', something nevertheless may be possibly known 'surely by the symbol or the darkness of similitude... something whereby we may discern the dream within the dream and choose the true'.²⁹⁵ This statement raises interesting questions, especially when we consider the Burne-Jones as the 'artist-dreamer'.²⁹⁶ Infused with the intellectual background of his early formation, Burne-Jones's discussion of 'the dream', in this instance and those in the future, has underlying philosophical connections that at once open up and close off the mystery at the heart of his creative enterprise. Theological in its fuller context, the fantastic and the religious are blended in the 'darkness of similitude', that is 'not altogether *yesterday* nor yet *tom-morrow*, but is chiefly and above all a continual *to-day*, whose true expression is present action, present virtue; and this primary fact, this, the essence of what is signified by life, we have strangely forgotten at times'.²⁹⁷ In interesting relation to the popular perception that Pre-Raphaelitism and such revivalist movements were a dreamy retrospective, 'looking backwards, looking onwards for some golden year', Burne-Jones's claims for the continual '*to-day*' complicate notions of realism and fantasy, of the distinction between dream and reality in his words and work.

²⁹³ Burne-Jones, '*The Newcomes*,' 52-55.

²⁹⁴ Ibid, 54.

²⁹⁵ Ibid, 52.

²⁹⁶ Christian and Wildman, *Edward Burne-Jones: Victorian Artist-Dreamer*; In their early acquaintance, Rossetti considered Burne-Jones as 'one of the nicest young fellows in – Dreamland' (*Memorials*, 1:130).

²⁹⁷ Burne-Jones, '*The Newcomes*,' 52-3.

However, are these ideas ‘theological’? Could these ideas suggest the potential for a ‘theology of art’, as an art developing theological principles in the visual? In speaking of the plot of *The Newcomes*, Burne-Jones addresses the main character Clive, who chooses the unpopular vocation of an artist against the will of his family. It is here we would assume we might discern indications of what the theological or religious purpose of the artist is in Burne-Jones’s view. Almost immediately he points to Ruskin’s pamphlet published on ‘Pre-Raphaelitism’ in 1851, and proceeds to describe not ‘*what*’ is the best thing to do, but ‘*how*’ one does it in life, in whatever industry or vocation.²⁹⁸ Though Burne-Jones may relate to Clive, who ‘views his dreamland through a London fog’, he does not spend long articulating how he may personally frame his own life in relation to this character in the plot, and the paragraph takes much from Ruskin’s pamphlet in its general discussion of what ‘can honor God most by doing’.²⁹⁹ Such a reference to Ruskin’s authority provides Burne-Jones a touchstone as he considers anew these ‘manifestations’ and ‘dreams’ as they relate not only to a religious context but an artistic one. Coming near the close of his article, after he discusses the ‘godly crusade’ of ‘heroic men, conquerors, prophets, poets, painters, musicians’, we indeed gain a sense of his homage to the ideas and works of his Pre-Raphaelite forebearers and Ruskin in particular as important intellectual bridges for him.³⁰⁰ However, it raises the question about what, if anything, makes Burne-Jones’s thinking distinct, and what informs his grappling with the ‘symbol and darkness of similitude...something whereby we may discern the dream within the dream and choose the true’, in this article and in his artistic enterprise.³⁰¹ What makes it theological and what sort of a theology is he developing and pursuing?

²⁹⁸ Ibid, 56.

²⁹⁹ Ibid; John Ruskin, ‘Pre-Raphaelitism,’ (1851).

³⁰⁰ Burne-Jones, ‘*The Newcomes*,’ 53.

³⁰¹ Ibid, 52.

Burne-Jones, abstaining ‘altogether from quotation or digest of the history in the *Newcomes*’, seeks to ‘merely point out the chief moral design of the book’.³⁰² This is the central thrust of the essay that is bookended first by his discussion of romanticism and false idealism, genius and its manifestation, and afterwards, by the brief consideration of Clive’s artistic profession and Ruskin’s philosophy of art, work, and godliness. For him, ‘the central purpose of the book for which I imagine it was mainly written, reaching to the very heart and core of social disease, unhappy wedded life’.³⁰³ Indeed, the classic Victorian novel revolved around and reached its climax and resolution in the marriage of two protagonists – *The Newcomes* is not unusual that one of its ‘central’ themes is marriage, and specifically, marriage for monetary advancement. Further, it was of great interest to the Pre-Raphaelites in their thematic artistic choices and personal lives – John Everett Millais, for instance, devoted quite a few projects, ‘Hogarthian’ in mood, to the social problem and personal fantasy of chaste bridesmaids, and their opposite, the unmarried.³⁰⁴ Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Burne-Jones’s future mentor, wrote a poem based upon Hans Memling’s painting of the *Mystic Marriage of St. Katharine*.³⁰⁵ Published in *The Germ* in 1850, the poem, and his own painting of the subject seven years later when Burne-Jones would be working alongside him in the studio, shows ‘Mystery: Katharine, the Bride of Christ,’ as a somewhat inaccessible, sad reality, much as his *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* seems a critical commentary on a sexualised version of the Annunciation moment, of threatened virginity and aggressive impregnation.

³⁰² Ibid, 55.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Marcia Pointon, ‘Histories of Matrimony: J.E. Millais’ in *Pre-Raphaelites Reviewed* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989) 100-120.

³⁰⁵ Dante Gabriel Rossetti, ‘The Mystic Marriage of St. Katharine, by the same; in the Hospital of St. John at Bruges,’ *The Germ*, vol. 4 (1850), 180. Note that ‘Mummeling’ is the Victorian spelling of the painter who is now referred to as ‘Memling’. Similarly ‘Katharine’ is most often referred to as ‘Catherine’.

Young Burne-Jones, who once exalted the monastic life at Mount St. Bernard and considered ‘founding’ a monastery with fellow students in London,³⁰⁶ here moves to question and consider the theme of marriage. ‘The marriages that are not made in heaven, but if anywhere out of this strange world, why least of all in Heaven. Of all the marvels in this same universe that pass our poor philosophy I doubt not this of marriage is the strangest, seeing to what end it has arrived at last, and from what beginning! Were one to ask the sober question now at this late hour, why was it first ordained, how would he be answered?’³⁰⁷ Marriage, for him, is a ‘marvel’, ‘strangest’ of all marvels, and finding its origins in and ordained by the church. Here, Burne-Jones is potentially making an oblique suggestion to the *Book of Common Prayer* (1662), which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, he would have been familiar with as the standard of the Anglican Church and the subject of recent controversy. This creedal text stated that ‘holy Matrimony’ was divinely instituted ‘in the time of man’s innocency’. Marriage is set apart as an ancient institution created at the dawn of time to unite Adam and Eve. However, it signified

unto us the mystical Union that is betwixt Christ and his Church: which holy estate Christ adorned, and beautified with his presence, and first miracle that he wrought in Cana of Galilee [where he turned water into wine at a wedding feast], and is commended of St. Paul to be honourable among all men, and therefore...taken...in the fear of God, duly considering the causes for which Matrimony was ordained.³⁰⁸

There is a potential tie between the ‘mystical’ and ‘miracle’ of marriage in this formulation that relates to the ‘marvel’ and ‘strangeness’ for Burne-Jones. However, in answering his own question (‘why was it first ordained, how would he be answered?’),

³⁰⁶ *Memorials*, 1:53; Burne-Jones to Cornell Price, Aug. 5, 1853 (fol. 8, MS Save 1661, Yale Center for British Art), quoted by Crossman, ‘Art as Lived Religion,’ 72. See Chapter 1.

³⁰⁷ Burne-Jones, ‘*The Newcomes*,’ 55.

³⁰⁸ *Book of Common Prayer*, accessed 5 September, 2018, <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/book-common-prayer/form-solemnization-matrimony> This portion has largely been unchanged since the seventeenth century and represents the most consistent language over its numerous editions.

Burne-Jones mingles different language in his text: ‘Suppose he should answer to this result – “It was ordained to bear the burden of a great mystery, the secret of the marriage of the Lamb, that we might not be without a continual symbol whereby to comprehend that holy union, that when the Bridegroom came we might know him and receive him worthily.” Mysticism! say you: not so, but forgotten truth.’³⁰⁹ If the *Book of Common Prayer* is taken as the main source text for how and why marriage was ‘ordained’, we cannot find in this formulation where Burne-Jones would have pulled the notion of ‘the secret of the marriage of the Lamb’. Further, it is not a particular reference to anything in *The Newcomes* itself, neither is it in his recent readings of Ruskin nor in the Pre-Raphaelites themselves. We then must question his use of the phrase, and trace back into his controversial studies of Tractarian theology, in which a suggestion for the meaning of it may be discovered and thereby indicate how it fits into a broader understanding of Burne-Jones’s initial idea of symbolism, God, and the purpose and aim of art.

The Secret of the Marriage of the Lamb

The interior quotation inside Burne-Jones’s passage – ‘It was ordained to bear the burden of a great mystery, the secret of the marriage of the Lamb, that we might not be without a continual symbol whereby to comprehend that holy union, that when the Bridegroom came we might know him and receive him worthily’ – does not come from any particular source.³¹⁰ It is Burne-Jones’s rhetorical device, in which he has posed a question (‘Were one to ask the sober question...how would he be answered?’) and he answers himself in another voice. The imagery, since it does not come directly from the *Book of Common Prayer* on marriage, appears unexpected, especially as we continue to remind ourselves the context of the essay as a review of a modern-life novel. ‘The marriage of the Lamb’ points

³⁰⁹ Burne-Jones, ‘*The Newcomes*,’ 55.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

instead to the Book of Revelation, the Apocalypse – specifically, Chapter 19. ‘Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.’³¹¹ ‘And he saith unto me. Write. Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith to me. These are true sayings of God.’³¹²

The Book of Revelation, as a mystical, enigmatic piece of scripture, could be understood in a variety of ways.³¹³ Burne-Jones himself speaks of ‘great mystery’ in which the ‘marriage of the Lamb’ is a ‘secret’.³¹⁴ Here, this chapter will try to suggest a way Burne-Jones understood this phrase and why he was attracted to it considering his previous formative training in theology. Arguably, he was not only attracted to this imagery in this review but also not long into his life as an artist, when he would be sketching selections from the famous Jan van Eyck Ghent Altarpiece showing the ‘Worship [or ‘Adoration’] of the Holy Lamb’ scene from Revelation as soon as 1859.³¹⁵ Similar such themes would recur through Burne-Jones’s career and the Van Eyck ‘Worship of the Holy Lamb’ would continue to impact and shape some of his conceptions for subjects and compositions, especially as he designs stained glass windows that attract further attention as exhibited art pieces in their own right.³¹⁶ Van Eyck is most remembered for his influence on the Pre-Raphaelites and their students through the appearance of the *Arnolfini Wedding Portrait* in London’s National Gallery 1849; the Ghent Altarpiece, a copy of which was held by the same collector in London at the time, remained in the private home since the gallery was not interested at the

³¹¹ Revelation 19:7 King James Version.

³¹² Rev 19:9 KJV.

³¹³ The Book of Revelation constitutes ‘a paradigmatic contemplative vision of the world transformed through the light of the supreme Being: the vision of creation restored through Christ’ (Hedley, *The Iconic Imagination*, 218).

³¹⁴ Burne-Jones, ‘*The Newcomes*,’ 55.

³¹⁵ ‘Sketchbook,’ *Victoria and Albert Museum: Collections*, accessed 1 March 2021, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1078501/sketchbook-burne-jones-edward/>.

³¹⁶ ‘Adoration of the Magi,’ *Victoria and Albert Museum: Collections*, accessed 1 March 2021, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O88582/adoration-of-the-magi-cartoon-burne-jones-edward/>.

time in showing it, due to lack of funds.³¹⁷ But, as Burne-Jones's sketchbook indicates, at least ten years later he was sketching from its lush detail. This is the imagery discussed by Alexis-François Rio in his book on Christian art that Burne-Jones valued during his time of transition from theology to art.³¹⁸ 'All of the attributes which are given in the Apocalypse to the Lamb without spot, - that grand and imposing scene in which appear the seven candlesticks, the four angels, the four evangelists, and the four and twenty elders prostrate before the Redeemer of the world, were represented in the churches, as if in contrast to the triumphal pomp displayed by the pagan emperors.'³¹⁹

However, in this initial survey of related imagery of Revelation's 'marriage of the Lamb', we find no direct reason why Burne-Jones would use the phrase in the context of *The Newcomes* and why he would connect marriage in the domestic sense with this mystical marriage in the Apocalypse. For him, it is this specific idea, rather than the Edenic idea explicitly mentioned in the *Book of Common Prayer*, that represents a 'continual symbol whereby to comprehend that holy union, that when the Bridegroom came we might know and receive him worthily.'³²⁰ In his words, the Bridegroom and the Lamb become convoluted, much as in Revelation it described how 'the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.'³²¹ As Rio had already mentioned, this Lamb/Bridegroom represents the 'Redeemer of the world', and he discusses this scene in the context of describing early mosaics that contain the common iconography of Jesus.³²² Jesus/Lamb/Bridegroom, in

³¹⁷ Jane Langley, 'Pre-Raphaelites or ante-Dürerites?' *The Burlington Magazine* 137, no. 1109 (August 1995): 502. Rossetti himself saw the original, though was disappointed with it in comparison to other works by Van Eyck (Leonée Ormond, 'Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Old Masters,' *The Yearbook of English Studies* 36, no. 2 [2006]: 161).

³¹⁸ *Memorials*, 1:141. Indeed, this was one of the books Burne-Jones gave to Georgiana early in their relationship – 'even before our engagement'.

³¹⁹ Alexis-François Rio, *The Poetry of Christian Art* (London: T. Bosworth, 1854), 7.

³²⁰ Burne-Jones, 'The Newcomes,' 55.

³²¹ Rev 19:7 KJV; 'It is a vision of the supreme Being centred upon the lamb sacrificed' (Hedley, 218).

³²² Rio, *The Poetry of Christian Art*, 7.

common iconography, is following after the traditional interpretation of Christ as the Lamb of God (*Agnus Dei*), the final sacrificial victim offered by God that offers the potential for union between God and Man – a ‘holy union’, as Burne-Jones described.³²³ Thus, Van Eyck depicted the Holy Lamb on a sacrificial altar, pouring out his blood in a heavenly banquet that suggests a higher version of the liturgical action of Holy Communion. In these representations and in the Book of Revelation, we see how the ‘images of paradise, feast, contemplation and song’ are ‘linked in Christian culture’, ultimately coming together as ‘the Eucharist’ which ‘is the *feast* upon the body and blood of Christ’.³²⁴

Indeed, the visual splendor of the Van Eyck ‘Worship of the Holy Lamb’ and the early Christian mosaics described by Rio may have been immodest to the general Anglican audience. If there is a clear line between Van Eyck’s altarpiece, Rio’s words, and Scriptural precedent in the ‘marriage of the Lamb’, it would be assumed that this would not be. However, it is the distinct liturgical undertones that may have given many Protestant minds opportunity to pause, as in the visual and scriptural imagery connections are implied between the ‘Worship of the Holy Lamb’ with the sacrificial victim offered at consecration of the eucharistic elements. Not only was such ‘adoration’ towards the eucharistic materials prohibited by the Thirty-Nine Articles of the *Book of Common Prayer*, questions regarding what exactly the eucharist was and how it played a role in the theological and liturgical life of the Anglican church, was a major controversy at this point in the century as we have seen.³²⁵

We may question whether Burne-Jones’s attraction to this phrase, in this particular review as well as in later life as he depicts related images, stems from the rich potential for controversy and enigma around this ‘secret’. If we reflect upon the theology of his most

³²³ Burne-Jones, ‘*The Newcomes*,’ 55.

³²⁴ Hedley, *The Iconic Imagination*, 220;231-2.

³²⁵ See Chapter 1, ‘The Holy Eucharist.’

recent interest, we gain a potential avenue of understanding why Burne-Jones may have connected the ‘marriage of the Lamb’ with the problems in domestic marriages. As the *Book of Common Prayer* stated, there is an immediate connection between marriage as an institution and Christ’s public ministry – Jesus’s first miracle was at the wedding feast at Cana.³²⁶ This feast, in the mind of many Tractarian and Catholic thinkers, had a direct connection and was a foreshadowing of the final ‘feast’ in Jesus’s public ministry before his death: The Last Supper. Newman, Burne-Jones’s initial source of inspiration, articulates this explicitly when he said:

Such seems to be the connexion between the [Marriage of Cana] feast with which our Lord began, and that with which He ended his ministry...for what was that first miracle by which He manifested His glory in the former, but the strange and awful change of the element of water into wine? And what did He in the latter, but change the Paschal Supper and *the typical lamb into the sacrament of His atoning sacrifice*, and the creatures of bread and wine into the verities of His most precious Body and Blood? He began His ministry with a miracle; He ended it with a greater [emphasis added].³²⁷

This is not a direct reference to the explicit ‘marriage of the Lamb’ appearing in Revelation. However, it may point to a potential connection and complication in Burne-Jones’s use of the phrase ‘marriage of the Lamb’ in the context of domestic marriage. We must remember Burne-Jones had been reading Wilberforce’s *Holy Eucharist* at mealtimes, in which the sacramental logic of the consecration and reception of communion was laid out and discussed.³²⁸ Like Newman, Wilberforce discusses Christ as the sacrificial lamb, the

³²⁶ *Book of Common Prayer*, accessed 5 September, 2018, <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/book-common-prayer/form-solemnization-matrimony>

³²⁷ Newman, ‘Sermon 3. The Lord’s Last Supper and His First’, 38-9. See also See, for example, ‘Sermon 12. The Gospel Feast,’ *Parochial and Plain Sermons* vol. 7, 160-177 and ‘Sermon 12. Profession without Ostentation,’ *Parochial and Plain Sermons* vol. 1, 152-164.

³²⁸ ‘Christ’s presence is the Holy Eucharist is a real presence; that the blessings of the new life are truly bestowed in it through communion with the New Adam; that consecration is a real act, whereby the inward part or thing signified is joined to the outward or visible sign; and that the Eucharistic oblation is a real sacrifice’ (Wilberforce, *Holy Eucharist*, 5).

highest fulfillment of the *manna* given from heaven to feed the faithful – indeed, the supreme fulfillment of the prefigurative symbols of the Old Testament.³²⁹ Indeed, Wilberforce makes the direct connection between, Christ, ‘the true victim’ consecrated in the eucharist, with Revelation, where ‘it is described by St. John, who beheld a “Lamb as it had been slain,” in the heavenly courts’.³³⁰

In seeking ‘either by symbol or the darkness of similitude’ the possibility of ‘something whereby we may discern the dream within the dream, and choose the true’, Burne-Jones turns to the symbol of the ‘Lamb’ and its ‘secret’ marriage.³³¹ Using the enigma at the heart of Revelation, he seeks symbolism in the Lamb as he is received ‘worthily’ by the people.³³² He confirms this when he continues in his text by saying, ‘...we have done infinite dishonour and despite to the holy thing it signified....Does that story of Christ’s marriage with his people come home to us pure and holy? is there no darkness in our comprehension of the type?’³³³ This implied ‘type’ is the ‘Lamb’, which could be the image depicted by Van Eyck, discussed by Rio, and suggested by Newman and Wilberforce alike in the eucharist.

For Burne-Jones, the possibility of this connection to earthly communion is implied when he says ‘Christ’s marriage with his people’. Arguably, if he were speaking only and directly about the heavenly banquet of Revelation, he would not have pointed to the connection whereby ‘people’, rather than the angels and saints mentioned by Rio, are married with Christ. Indeed, it is the enigma at the heart of the typology of Revelation’s ‘secret of the marriage of the Lamb’ that allows him to expand the connections without explicitly defining

³²⁹ Wilberforce, *Holy Eucharist*, 248.

³³⁰ Ibid. Wilberforce’s reference to the ‘Lamb as it had been slain’ points directly to Revelation 5:5-6 (KJV): ‘And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.’

³³¹ Burne-Jones, ‘*The Newcomes*,’ 55.

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Ibid.

what he means. Prefiguring the ambiguity of his future language and artworks, Burne-Jones continues to play with the mystery of the enigma, arguing that men should ‘learn to believe all things here that they are but dim revelations of a hidden glory, that every finite thing in this vast universe is linked by ultimate relation to some eternity, is bound indissolubly to the feet of God’.³³⁴ Thus the domestic pattern of marriage between man and woman can be a ‘dim revelation’ of the higher, ‘hidden’ glory, the ‘forgotten truth’ and ‘secret’ of the ‘marriage of the Lamb’. Burne-Jones’s further clarification that ‘not an act nor law nor visible thing whatever but has its greater counterpart out of space and Time’³³⁵ reflects Wilberforce, not simply in pointing to the ‘Lamb’, but in how the theologian speaks of consecration of the eucharist as ‘a real act, whereby the inward part or thing signified is joined to the outward or visible sign’.³³⁶ Therefore, a sacramental scheme implicitly underlies Burne-Jones’s language on the ‘marriage of the Lamb’ that could connect domestic, secular marriage to the eucharistic sacrifice explicitly discussed in his reading of Wilberforce’s *The Holy Eucharist*.

Wedding Feasts

As well as the sacramental theology he had just studied, Burne-Jones’s unusual rumination on marriage is deeply embedded in on-going personal events. Only several years after this article was published, he had not only entered an engagement with young Georgiana, but Morris married and commissioned his architectural mentor, Phillip Webb, to create the Red House. These developments would be consequential for the expansion of their ‘little brotherhood’ and the eventual founding of the design firm Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.³³⁷

³³⁴ Burne-Jones, ‘*The Newcomes*,’ 55-56.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

³³⁶ Wilberforce, *Holy Eucharist*, 248.

³³⁷ Christian and Wildman, *Edward Burne-Jones*, 65.

This would create a safe place for Burne-Jones as a budding artist to develop his talent, skills, and ideas. From the outset, he already showed his interest in works of a serial nature, featuring processions such as wedding unions and feasts. Most scholarship recognises his love and development of serial paintings, from the beginning to end of his career.³³⁸ Creating large narrative sequences that depict literary tales and myths, Burne-Jones often suspends and ‘transfigures’ Pre-Raphaelite realism by relying much on symbolic affects and shrouding conclusive resolution in mystery.³³⁹ Though many of these early and late works feature weddings and procession onto marital nuptials, few look at the theological potentials in Burne-Jones’s presentation of matrimony. At the Red House, we can begin an analysis of Burne-Jones’s unique ideas for art in a way that could relate to his thoughts on marriage, art, and the meaning of life under the divine scheme of salvation and the sacraments.

Among his many (and incomplete) projects at the Red House was a series of seven frescoes in the dining room depicting the tale of Sir Degrevaunt (Figures 2-3). It is a suitable choice of tale, especially considering the two main scenes (that Burne-Jones does complete) are of a marriage procession and a marriage feast. These are two events that have directly taken place in the Morris’s life and led to the founding of the household itself. (Indeed, ‘feasting’ itself was an apt scene, considering the feasting that would continue in a room where the family took its meals.) Furthermore, the fuller story, which Burne-Jones likely intended to depict, is relevant to his and Morris’s shared journey from a ‘holy’ to married life. Sir Degrevaunt is a crusader uninterested in a relationship with a woman. However, upon his return to defend his land under attack, he falls in love with an earl’s daughter, performs several heroic feats to win her hand, and romances her in her bedroom all while remaining chaste. As an ideal, it can be argued the character comes close to how Burne-Jones and

³³⁸ Christian and Wildman, *Edward Burne-Jones*, 65-66; Elizabeth Prettejohn, ‘The Series Paintings,’ in *Edward Burne-Jones* (London: Tate Publishing, 2018), 169-195; Conrad, *Earthly Paradise*, 18-19.

³³⁹ Prettejohn, ‘Series Paintings,’ 180.

Morris would like to see their transition from religious exploits to those of art – and of marriage and family. Romantic and chivalrous, it relates to them on this higher personal level where they are contemplating and re-stating their personal and professional duties in this time of transition. Moreover, marriage as a theological and artistic theme was important to Burne-Jones, as he himself stated in his article. Marriage, Burne-Jones had argued, was inevitably connected to God. To be true it must be made in heaven and parallel Christ's, 'the Bridegroom's', union with his people. Therefore, it would follow that these works depicting marriage for a newly married couple in their home might consider these ideas visually.

Though the tale itself is of a distinctly Christian form of heroism, the sanction of Christ and that unity with his people does not come through to the lay viewer in Burne-Jones's depiction. How could the secret 'marriage of the Lamb' be portrayed without explicitly showing a Lamb as such? Or Christ? I argue that this notion would have been implicit even for Morris but most especially for Burne-Jones. To understand the complex nature of how Burne-Jones might portray such an intensely theological notion in these decorative wedding frescoes, we must first consider another major decorative work for the house that was even more intimate and personal for the pair of friends as they started their married, domestic, and professional lives: *The Prioress's Tale Cabinet*.

Even before the Sir Degrevant frescoes were designed, *The Prioress's Tale Cabinet* was given to William and Jane Morris in 1859 as a wedding present (Figure 4). An oak and deal cabinet designed by Phillip Webb and decorated by Burne-Jones, it depicts a tale by Chaucer, much loved by both Burne-Jones and Morris from the beginning to end of their careers. However, the choice of subject seems unusual at first glance: 'The Prioress's Tale' is the story of a young boy who was persecuted by the Jews because he had sung the Christian

hymn, 'Alma Redemptoris'.³⁴⁰ After his death, the Virgin Mary appeared, resurrecting him from the dead by placing a grain of wheat on his tongue. From then on, he could speak of the Jews' brutality and once again sing 'Alma Redemptoris'.³⁴¹

What might this choice of subject have to do with marriage, and the wedding for which the wardrobe was given? It was even to be placed in the intimacy of their master bedchamber, an altarpiece of sorts across from their massive four-poster bed. Many have argued that Chaucer's tale is blatantly antisemitic, and that by choosing the subject, Burne-Jones himself is implicated in antisemitic feelings.³⁴² Considering Burne-Jones's childhood experiences with Jewish friends, neighbours, and his extensive knowledge and reverence for the Old Testament and Jewish holidays discussed in Chapter 1, I believe this claim is not sufficiently supported, and therefore we must turn to the other theological issues within the tale to consider why Burne-Jones is interested in this particular theme.³⁴³

I argue that the only way to understand this seemingly strange subject in their bedroom is to look at it from the theological perspective Burne-Jones himself argues from in his *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* article. Read alongside Burne-Jones's own words, the

³⁴⁰ Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Prioress's Tale,' *The Works Now Newly Imprinted* (London: Kelmscott Press, 1896). In this instance, I am citing the later edition produced by the Kelmscott Press that Burne-Jones and Morris collaborated on in the years leading up to their deaths. Although it is indeed later (and the images Burne-Jones produced for this particular narrative in this later version will be analysed in the conclusion of this thesis), it represents their view of the story.

³⁴¹ 'Object of the Month: August' Ashmolean, accessed 30 December 2016, <http://www.ashmolean.org/ash/objectofmonth/2000-08/theobject.htm>.

³⁴² Albert B. Friedman, 'The "Prioress's Tale" and Chaucer's Anti-Semitism,' *The Chaucer Review* 9, no. 2 (Fall 1974): 129-188; John Archer, 'The Structure of Anti-Semitism in the "Prioress's Tale",' *The Chaucer Review* 19, no. 1 (Summer 1984): 46-54; Emmy Sark Zitter, 'Anti-Semitism in Chaucer's "Prioress's Tale",' *The Chaucer Review* 25, no. 4 (Spring 1991): 277-294. There was some discussion of the antisemitic implications of Burne-Jones's depiction of this theme at the Reassessing Burne-Jones 2019 conference, though no specific presentation addressed his relation to antisemitic ideas or how his work might have been shaped by his perception of Jewish practices and people.

³⁴³ Furthermore, Daniel F. Pigg argues that the fundamental issues at play in Chaucer's story are not those of antisemitism, although part of the humor for a medieval writer, but rather the themes of martyrdom, the Virgin Mary, and the theological subjects around those themes. Pigg, 'Refiguring Martyrdom: Chaucer's Prioress and Her Tale,' *The Chaucer Review* 29, no. 1 (1994): 65-73.

cabinet can be seen depicting the mysterious union in the ‘secret of the marriage of the Lamb’ between Christ, the bridegroom, and his people for which marriage is a ‘continual symbol’, a sacrament tied to eucharistic re-presentation, consecration, and communion of and with Christ.³⁴⁴

For this design, Burne-Jones uses the architecture of the cabinet to structure the composition. The doors ‘double’ Mary: she appears on both sides and is the most prominent figure by her sheer size, prominence, and repetition. On the left-hand door, she is standing, barely crouched, with her blue cloak drawn around her as she holds the wheat. A divine annunciatory dove alights at the hem of her red skirts and a host of angels, playing music and gold-winged, are stacked behind her. On the right-hand door, Mary bends over the open tomb of the little boy, who rises and opens his mouth to receive the grain. Behind them, the earlier scene of the boy’s persecution and death is portrayed in registers of colour like the flattened gothic decorative landscape of an illuminated manuscript. Below each door a separate register appears, where Chaucer is shown recording the text on the left and an undercroft of architecture, flowers, and text is shown on the right. Time, therefore, is compressed; not only in the continued, ever-presence of the object itself but its underlining of narrative repetition and ceaselessly spiraling continuity. ‘Alma Redemptoris’, the boy sings in the background before his death; ‘Alma Redemptoris’ he sings again at his resurrection; ‘Alma Redemptoris’ Chaucer writes on the pages of his tale. Burne-Jones concentrates on the mystery of the resurrection moment, representing the sacramental re-presentation of Christ over and over again. He is explicitly showing the resurrection of the little boy and yet, through implication, shows the resurrection of the divine Christ through the reference to the eucharistic host at communion, which is presented here by Mary as a grain of wheat. Like the ‘threshold’ of the communion altar, the cabinet becomes a ‘threshold’ with literal doors where a vision of the

³⁴⁴ Burne-Jones, *The Newcomes*, 55.

presentation of the host is represented. The thematic choice of ‘The Prioress’s Tale’ for a wedding cabinet, therefore, becomes less confounding when we consider ‘marriages made in heaven’ – the ‘secret of the marriage of the Lamb’ that is bound up in Christ’s ever-presence in the sacraments. It is this enigmatic symbolic scheme that allows him to create in a unique and innovative way as a training artist, informing his selection of certain subjects and his use of various media and its complicated and highly specific relation to its context. That the Virgin Mary, rather than Christ, is the giver of this ‘gift’ will become important later in this chapter and the remainder of the dissertation.

Therefore, the picture, showing the several stages of the story in a hieratic, stacked way that a stained-glass window would, centres around this moment of re-presentation, of resurrection, and ultimately of divine life and union with Christ through the eucharistic giving of bread – a grain of wheat. The child dies for Christ only to be resurrected by what Christ had returned through his death – new life in the body and blood he gave to unite ‘his people’ to himself continually under the symbol of the bread and wine. ‘The secret of the marriage of the Lamb’ could therefore be about not only about marriage but about divine communion. As discussed above, to talk about Christ as the Lamb is to discuss Him in a eucharistic form, an offered sacrifice recognised in Old Testament typology that extends all the way to John’s book of Revelation at the end of the New Testament.³⁴⁵ For Tractarian theology, all these references cohere in the consecration of the eucharist at the altar,³⁴⁶ a form of which is placed in their marriage chamber. In this instance, at the foot of the Morris’s marriage bed, the cabinet shows an example of how Christ may be ‘unified with his people’

³⁴⁵ Wilberforce, *The Holy Eucharist*, 248; Newman, ‘Sermon 12. The Gospel Feast,’ 162; Pusey, *The Presence of Christ*.

³⁴⁶ Wilberforce, *The Holy Eucharist*, 6-7; Pusey, *The Holy Eucharist*.

in the eucharist, which in itself is the ‘marriage of the Lamb’ that is the model for marriage of man and woman.

This is the sacred ‘feast’ replicated in the marriage feast frescoes of Sir Degrevaunt. Split between a ‘liturgical’ procession towards marital union and the feast, the gestures of communion structure the composition (Figure 2). In the feasting portion of the image, heads of the guests on the right side of the picture are bowed reverently; servants on the left side keep their heads down as they bear plates and vessels of wine (Figure 3). Degrevaunt, modelled by Morris, is seated at a table that appears as an altar, and in his hand, he offers to his wife, modelled by Jane Morris, a piece of bread in the exact shape of the eucharistic host. This is of the same essence as the grain of wheat offered to the boy by the Virgin Mary in *The Prioress’s Tale Cabinet* and has the same redemptive, unifying powers, especially when it comes to marriages which are supposed to be ‘made in heaven’.

Early Religious Work

We can compare these personal works to subsequent commissions Burne-Jones undertook in his early career. Several of these, especially those for religious contexts, would be rather controversial and undergo several curious changes.

A triptych originally designed for St. Paul’s, Brighton in 1861 held at the Tate Britain is the first of two versions that show a keen interest in this ‘union’ and its potential sensitivity within contexts where the depiction of the presence of the eucharist may lead to controversy (Figure 5). In fact, this church was at the centre of controversies surrounding the sacraments and frequent communion services that, for some, bordered on the ‘popish’ or ‘Jesuitical’.³⁴⁷ Already decorated with ceiling mosaics and an intricate roodscreen that recalled medieval

³⁴⁷ ‘Arthur Douglas Wagner’ (London: The Catholic Literature Association, 1933), accessed 13 August 2018, <http://anglicanhistory.org/bios/adwagner.html>.

traditions of separation between the altar and people, sacred and common spaces, Burne-Jones's altar would have been commissioned to fit the mood and style of highly ritualistic services that went on there.³⁴⁸

The piece is his first major attempt of a work in oil on canvas. His only precedent in oil paint was the work he had done on cabinets for the Red House and the resulting style and techniques here in this serious commission are different from the initial more personal, decorative work for Morris. Dark, heavily layered, and Italianate in its references, it is a work of experimentation of a young artist that has its successes and its failures. Despite the trouble he seemed to have with it, his unique approach to the conception of symbolical innovation comes through, and the piece evidences Burne-Jones's highly individual theological idea for art at the outset of his career.

The triptych shows the Adoration of the Magi at its centre and is flanked on either side by a split Annunciation – Gabriel to one side and Mary to the other. Each portion is set in an enclosed garden, with rose trellises, holly bushes, and apple trees all against a bright golden sky much as the famous Italian altars were leafed and embossed with gold.³⁴⁹ By the Mary of the Annunciation, there sits the symbolically correct pot of lilies, and in the lower corner of Gabriel's panel, a roughly painted snake slithers barely noticed in the grass. This latter reference shows the scene not simply as an isolated event in Biblical history but directly connected to the very first instance of sin in that long history. The first appearance of the

³⁴⁸ The building itself was completed in 1848 according to the latest in Gothic style. Fr. Wagner, the residing priest, insisted on the use of elaborate eucharistic vestments and decoration. S. Gresham, *St Paul's Church, Brighton: Its Story 1849-1929* (Brighton, 1929), 20.

³⁴⁹ Burne-Jones had seen quite a few examples of Italian altars on his first trip to Italy in 1859. Furthermore, he had been working in studio with Rossetti, who had been designing an altarpiece of his own for Llandaff Cathedral much in the same mood. For a further comparison of their influences, on each other and from Italian masters, see Elizabeth Prettejohn, *Modern Painters, Old Masters: The Art of Imitation from the Pre-Raphaelites to the First World War* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2017), 121–7.

snake to Eve in the Garden of Eden led to sin and the Fall of Man followed by their expulsion from Eden by the first angel. At the Annunciation, a second angel has come to announce the news of the redemption of man to Mary, posited here as the ‘Second Eve’, whose acceptance of the news would ultimately reverse Eve’s misdeed and fulfil the prophesy that a woman would ‘crush’ the serpent’s head.³⁵⁰

The symbolic narrative is straightforward and has theological and artistic precedent. However, these references take on greater complexity in this instance when compared with what is depicted in the central panel of Adoration. Here, much as in the frescoes of the *Wedding of Sir Degrevant*, William and Jane Morris are used as central models – William as the first kneeling king and Jane as Mary holding the Christ child. Around them maidens hold the traditionally Victorian signs of Christmastide – holly sprigs – and warm swaddling clothes over a fire. Shepherds (one of which is a self-portrait of Burne-Jones) play instruments behind the procession of kings who kneel and bear the gold, frankincense, and myrrh. It is a complex composition of many figures – a composition that Burne-Jones would change for the church in a second version that is much more simplified and removes a significant, and potentially controversial, element from the centre of the scene.

In the first version, Christ is sitting on the lap of his mother gazing upon the first king, William Morris, who looks back up at him. One of his hands is raised by his mother. In his small hand, quite hard to distinguish in the darkness of the background, he holds and offers the king an apple.³⁵¹ The gesture is eucharistic, in how the host is doled out and received in communion. The idea is further developed when one sees that his other hand clutches a piece

³⁵⁰ Genesis 3:15 KJV.

³⁵¹ It is at first hard to determine what this circular object held by the baby Jesus is. Before the altarpiece’s restoration in 2018, the object almost disappears into its background and, once seen, appears flat and muddy in colour. However, in the direct light and fully cleaned and restored, one can distinctly see an attempt to make the object rounded like a ball and hues of greens and reds, which would confirm it as an apple. This was witnessed personally by the author.

of Mary's red dress to his chest, making a foreboding reference to the blood at his crucifixion and death, and the consecrated wine henceforward given at communion. Therefore, the Christ-child, just born but soon to be reborn for all of humanity through death on the cross, becomes the consecrated eucharistic host, which Mary held in her womb, on her lap as a babe, and in her arms at his death. Much as Mary - holding his hand, bearing and giving him his flesh - is the New Eve, he is the New Adam and this new apple helps to pinpoint all of salvation history. Creation, sin, and redemption are all at once connected to the moment Christ would 'come home pure and holy' in the union of heaven and earth in the sacrament of the eucharist,³⁵² which would be received much as Morris the 'king' is shown receiving the apple from Christ.³⁵³ The theological implications are expansive, and each subtle detail, the very mood of the picture, attempts to wrestle with, pin down, and visualise how the invisible is made visible, God is man in the Christ child, and how it can be continued to be made known in the sacraments.

The second version eliminates these references. An altogether brighter, cleaner picture it does not show Christ offering an apple. In fact, he offers nothing, and like a well-behaved child, keeps his hands neatly folded in his lap while the kings present their gifts. While technical or contextual issues most likely played into the change – the initial design was too dark to see, and so complex that the candles on the altar obscured any idea of what was going on – it can be wondered whether the innovative way Burne-Jones used the symbols had been misread or taken as too 'Jesuitical' and therefore too risky at a time when the priest there was facing questions about how he administered the sacraments. This is an

³⁵² Burne-Jones, 'The Newcomes,' 55-6.

³⁵³ Think again of Wilberforce in *The Holy Eucharist*, especially when he says: Christ's presence in the Holy Eucharist is a real presence; that the blessings of the new life are truly bestowed in it through communion with the New Adam; that consecration is a real act, whereby the inward part or thing signified is joined to the outward or visible sign; and that the Eucharistic oblation is a real sacrifice' (Wilberforce, *The Holy Eucharist*, 5).

interesting consideration, especially when we consider another incident when Burne-Jones designed a daring ‘innovation’ depicting the Annunciation only a few years before.³⁵⁴

This earlier design was for a stained-glass window which appears near the altar at a church refurbished by William Butterfield, one of the most well-known architects of the Gothic Revival during and immediately after the Oxford Movement (Figure 6). This window was one of Burne-Jones’s first commissions, and quite a prestigious one at that. It depicts the moment of the Annunciation, where the angel Gabriel appears to the Virgin Mary and announces to her that she is to bear the Son of God.³⁵⁵ Rather than placing the two figures in a clearly differentiated space, across from one another on a horizontal plane as usually depicted, he uses the narrow verticality of the window to arrange the figures. Mary appears in the forefront, kneeling. The angel Gabriel appears directly behind her, off her shoulder looking over her with a lily in his hand. This choice of composition is unusual and striking, especially when we further consider the central axis of the image: a dove. Usually a dove, in images of the Annunciation and Baptism, appears near the top of the image, so to clearly show the intervention of the Holy Spirit in the act of conception and purification. However, here, Mary tenderly tucks the dove to her breast, gently nestling her face against it. Butterfield was outraged by this daring depiction and demanded that Burne-Jones change the design. Burne-Jones refused, later recalling to studio assistant Thomas Rooke that the piece was an incredible ‘innovation.’³⁵⁶ He would go on to recommend that Rooke, in those circumstances, stick to the traditional iconography described in standard books on sacred

³⁵⁴ Burne-Jones to Thomas Rooke, quoted by Lago, *Burne-Jones Talking*, 28.

³⁵⁵ Luke 1: 26-38 KJV.

³⁵⁶ Lago, *Burne-Jones Talking*, 28.

art.³⁵⁷ Though Burne-Jones stood by his ‘innovation’ in this instance, he was not to receive another commission from the prolifically designing and renovating Butterfield ever again.³⁵⁸

Thus, there emerges here an interest and an issue, a potential and a problem: ‘the secret of the marriage of the Lamb’ – the ‘holy union’ whereby Christ, and therefore, art, can ‘come home to us pure and holy’.³⁵⁹ It is a question about making visible the invisible reality of the mystery, and how the schematic of the sacraments, so controversial at the time, could be used as a model. For it is from this description of the ‘forgotten truth’ of the ‘secret of the marriage of the Lamb’, Burne-Jones moved in his article quite easily into a discussion on illustration not wholly distant from the themes and tones of this ‘mystery’. As will be seen, this makes a case for an art that may not always directly and explicitly religious but perpetually considers these questions and schemes of divine made earthly, ideal made real, God made man.

‘O lovers, how true it is!’: Love Between Worlds

Burne-Jones concludes his essay with ‘a few words concerning’ the illustrations of *The Newcomes*, though he spends little time actually analysing the work of the illustrator, ‘Mr. Doyle’.³⁶⁰ Indeed, he claims that ‘such a happy combination of author and artist so rarely occurs...and has been accordingly fulfilled’.³⁶¹ However, it is not the particular scenes illustrated but the ‘symbolical drawings which form round the initial letters of the chapters’ which is where Burne-Jones finds ‘real art and poetical comprehension.’³⁶² Ruminating,

³⁵⁷ Ibid. ‘It’s best not to depart from tradition – brings confusion into things that are at no time too easy to make clear. I’ll lend you Didron.’ Adolphe Napoleon Didron, *Christian Iconography: or the History of Christian Art in the Middle Ages* vol. 1. ed. and trans. by E.J. Millington and Margaret Stokes (London: G. Bell, 1886).

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ Burne-Jones, ‘*The Newcomes*,’ 55-6.

³⁶⁰ Ibid, 59;61.

³⁶¹ Ibid, 60.

³⁶² Ibid, 61.

much in the Pre-Raphaelite mode, about the industrial nature of print culture and illustration,³⁶³ Burne-Jones's does not look at a particular example of illustration from *The Newcomes*. Instead, he describes at length an example from the original Pre-Raphaelite publication *The Germ*.³⁶⁴ Though he mentions Dante Gabriel Rossetti, his future mentor, and his illustration for the 'Maids of Elfenmere', he spends significantly more time talking about William Holman Hunt and his design for the poem, 'My Beautiful Lady'.

This will not be the only time Burne-Jones mentions Holman Hunt. Extended discussions of the artist and an example of his work appear in both this piece in January and his article on Ruskin in April.³⁶⁵ It is a largely unexamined part of scholar's interest in the various influences of Burne-Jones. I believe that Burne-Jones's references to and discussions of Hunt are significant for the way he moves forward; not, perhaps, for the style he begins to develop under the likes of Rossetti and even G.F. Watts but, rather, as a figure in the Pre-Raphaelite movement who sought particularly Biblical and religious subjects in a way that made Burne-Jones think about how he might apply deeply theological notions to innovative ways of conceptualising subjects in art that may be both within and outside the religious subjects. Both this and the following chapter will compare the two Holman Hunt works cited by Burne-Jones in each of his articles to his own early works. This will begin to show a more complex relation between the two artists, arguing for the particular influence of Holman Hunt's work on several of Burne-Jones's initial designs.³⁶⁶

³⁶³ Rodney Engen, *Pre-Raphaelite Prints: The Graphic Art of Millais, Holman Hunt, Rossetti, and their Followers* (London: Lund Humphries Publishers, 1995), 8-9.

³⁶⁴ Burne-Jones, 'The Newcomes,' 60.

³⁶⁵ Burne-Jones, 'Mr. Ruskin's New Volume,' *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* (1856), The Rossetti Archive <http://www.rossettiarchive.org/docs/Burne-Jones004.raw.html>.

³⁶⁶ See Chapter 3.

In this article on *The Newcomes*, the piece he describes is the frontispiece illustration for *The Germ* by William Holman Hunt which appears alongside Thomas Woolner's poem entitled, 'My Beautiful Lady' (Figure 7).³⁶⁷ His description of the illustration, its subject, and relationship to the poem itself is worth quoting at length:

As the frontispiece of one number was an etching by Holman Hunt, an illustration indeed to a poem, but the latter having so little reference to it, that *it may well stand for an independent picture; truly a song without words, and yet not wholly speechless, for out of its golden silence came voices for all who would hearken, telling a tale of love.* Two lovers are together in a meadow, by a pool of standing water, and behind them a circle of trees is throwing morning shadows on the grass; she is kneeling, stooping forwards to gather wild flowers growing on the bank, clasped and circled by the arm of him who loves her and shall be her future lord, he is bending lovingly over her, shielding her from harm; yet there is no peril in the water, and the space between her and the edge is great, still he clasps her lightly, guarding her from a danger that is not: judge of it, *O lovers! how true it is.* But below, in another scene, lies a figure flung upon the foreground, lying all his length, and his face pressed deeply into the fresh mould of a grave, for behind him, in the distance, the nuns are passing, singing *Dies iræ* and *Beati mortui*, and the bell is sounding close behind him as he lies quiet. Surely he will never rise and come away! wherefore did she die, and how? and was it long after the flower-gathering by the water side on the summer day. I know how it all came to pass, and you would also if you saw the picture: silently, quite silently, has the story taken form. I would not tell the legend as it comes to me, for your version would be altogether otherwise, and yet both most true: something like this we cry for, is it not like a cry for food?

Out of oblivion, for the sake of justice, I have made this memorial of a forgotten picture [emphasis added] ...³⁶⁸

Burne-Jones's extensive description conjures up a story – a story, that while it may not relate to 'your version' of 'reading' it or even to the poem it was meant to illustrate, exemplifies for him what it means to design illustrations. His words have a deep aura of mystery, a similar

³⁶⁷ 'My Beautiful Lady,' The Rossetti Archive, accessed 1 November 2018, <http://www.rossettiarchive.org/docs/woolner001.raw.html>.

³⁶⁸ Burne-Jones, *The Newcomes*, 60-1.

tone to how he discussed the ‘secret’ and ‘forgotten truths’ of the ‘marriage of the Lamb’ only paragraphs before.³⁶⁹ The ‘forgotten picture’ shows many stories – stories of love – that are different but all ‘most true’, that are what ‘we cry for, is it not like a cry for food?’ The ‘truth’, the ‘love’, the ‘food’ he speaks of are not simply earthly things but in fact, are divine. The story he tells is about life, death, and the important theme I identify as ‘love between worlds’. Divine food, as he had learned in Wilberforce, can be equated manna, with the eucharist, and the ‘true’ love of God, the higher relation to the ‘Real’, and ‘love between the worlds’ of heaven and earth is made available through Christ.³⁷⁰

Love between worlds: it was a theme dealt with by many of the Pre-Raphaelites, but particularly, and most poignantly, by Dante Gabriele Rossetti and Burne-Jones. Rossetti was the man to whom Burne-Jones turned after Marriott persuaded him not to turn to Rome, after he himself had decided he could not even serve religion simply in the role of a minister. Rossetti’s own ideas on religion are complexly situated, but their common interest in the theme of the pursuit of divine love, its embodiment in the physical world of art, led to their friendship and a collaboration producing unique works from each artist respectively.³⁷¹ For Burne-Jones, his devotion to the writings of Newman and the Tractarians in his formative years allows him an understanding of art, its means and its ends that touches deeply metaphysical, theological questions. Burne-Jones, from the outset to his final years, conceives the very material of art – their subjects, their stories, their physical make-up as art-objects – as an act of creation within divine and earthly hierarchies of theological discourse that places man and his art between rings of heaven and hell; life, death and eternity. This love between worlds, this study of God and God’s relation to the world: it is Burne-Jones’s

³⁶⁹ Ibid, 55.

³⁷⁰ Wilberforce, *The Holy Eucharist*, 248.

³⁷¹ Stephen Cheeke, ‘What Did Rossetti Believe?’ *Essays in Criticism* 63, no. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 148-176.

obsession, becoming the main focus of a highly material art that pursues the immaterial; a complexly philosophical art that questions and subsequently pushes the metaphysical boundaries of the material means of existence for art – and ultimately, for humanity. It may not be immediately apparent in the quote or individual works of art, isolated for their own sakes. However, once we read it in the context of his early thoughts in his articles, and begin to unpack subsequent, significant artworks, it can be seen how deeply, though subtly and masterfully, Burne-Jones imbues his conceptions with important theological sacramental meaning that revolves around ‘the love between worlds’ made available in the incarnation and resurrection.

The Blessed Damozel

To fully understand the influence of Hunt’s ‘Beautiful Lady’ and the importance of Burne-Jones’s interpretation of it, we can compare his description to an illustrative painting of a poem of a similar theme he creates not long after: *The Blessed Damozel* (Figure 8). The painting arose out of an 1857 commission by Pre-Raphaelite patron Thomas Edward Plint, a Leeds stockbroker who was ‘an ardent Evangelical, closely associated with the Christian socialists.’³⁷² He had suggested of the young, largely untried painter a ‘Scripture subject,’ but ultimately said that ‘you [Burne-Jones] must have [a subject] you can delight in yourself. Let me have your best work and thoughts and the subject I leave to you.’³⁷³ Burne-Jones’s choice to paint a Rossetti poem – rather than an explicit ‘Scripture subject’ – is a revealing one; not so much a ‘compromise’ between the religious and artistic needs of patron and painter respectively but more so a presentation of how the two – religion and art, painting, poetry,

³⁷² ‘Notes Lot 0050’ *Christie’s Sale of the Collection of Giorgio Marsan and Umberta Nasi* (12-13 December 2007). Email correspondence with Diana Maddison, Christie’s Client Service Representative, 8 November 2017.

³⁷³ Thomas Edward Plint to Edward Burne-Jones, March 1857 quoted in ‘Notes Lot 0050’.

and faith – might effectively be combined in a complexly nuanced and intellectually theological way.³⁷⁴

Thus, we can begin to unravel the deeper complications involved in Burne-Jones's *Blessed Damozel* as something that might be 'altogether otherwise' from a reading of Rossetti's poem, from potential readings of the painting as an 'independent picture' with 'so little reference' to the poem's text, and yet a 'most true' tale of love that is connected with a theological, Tractarian vision of sacramentality and intensely intimate relationships between worlds, intricate offerings of grace, and suspended and pursued revelation. That Rossetti's poem is an extended series of layers and changes over the years speaks of the depth and breadth of the complex artistic vision in which Burne-Jones wanted to engage visually. In this section it will be shown that when taken together, Rossetti's separate iterations of the poem, William Holman Hunt's picture and Burne-Jones's description of it, and Burne-Jones's ultimate production of *The Blessed Damozel*, all become related in Burne-Jones's unique theological vision for art. All the different verbal and visual depictions have striking surface similarities, and yet, it is these similarities he uses so that he can then turn each on its head in a subtle, relationally inverted way. Relying on elusive connections between Rossetti's poems, artistic examples of illustration, and a theology underpinned by the secret 'marriage of the Lamb', Burne-Jones's selection of and work on *The Blessed Damozel* could be seen to exemplify his desire to fulfil his own requirement for illustration, his patron's request for a 'Scripture subject,' and to create an art with more complicated metaphysical potentials.

The finished painting as we see it today features at its centre 'the Blessed Damozel'. She is an exemplary Pre-Raphaelite beauty, with a distinctly strong jawline and long, crimped tresses of hair much in Rossetti's style. Arrayed in rose and gold garments, she casts her

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

haloed head over a fence and gazes into the watery depths at her feet. She holds a crown and is surrounded by a rich garden of flowers. A tree just barely blooming appears behind her, with blue birds flitting in the garden. The sky is pure gold and evokes the heavenly bliss of Renaissance altarpieces.

The main phrase that is said to be illustrated by Burne-Jones in the *Blessed Damozel* is the poem's opening:

The blessed Damozel leaned out
From the gold bar of Heaven:
Her blue grave eyes were deeper much
Than a deep water, even.³⁷⁵

However, by simply reading this passage into the painting, the work misses much of its complex relation not only to its source in the poem but also visual and theological sources Burne-Jones was referencing in this significant early creative enterprise. As we read on, the painting does not sit so easily with the very next verse.

She had three lilies in her hand,
And the stars in her hair were seven.
Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,
No wrought flowers did adorn,
But a white rose of Mary's gift
On the neck meetly worn;³⁷⁶

As aforementioned, there are three iterations of Rossetti's poem at the time Burne-Jones was selecting and designing this project – the initial 1847 version, the 1850 Germ edition, and the 1856 revision published in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*.³⁷⁷ While there are indeed slight differences between this earlier version of the poem and what Burne-Jones would have also read in the 1847 and 1856 revisions ('For service meetly worn' for

³⁷⁵ Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'Blessed Damozel,' *The Germ* (January 1850), 80-83.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Estée O'Connor, "'A Few Further Fidgetty Changes': Tracing the Written and Visual Minutiae of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Blessed Damozel Series, 1847-1881' (M.A. diss., University of York, 2017).

example, in the latter), the bulk of the descriptive material remains the same and Burne-Jones's own visual depiction curiously does not align with its specific visual indicators. 'She had three lilies in her hand,' is not only left out but replaced with a crown; there are no stars to be seen in her hair and a halo surrounds her head instead; and a white rose cannot be found on her neck or anywhere in the painting for that matter.

An early oil sketch in gold indicates that Burne-Jones was likely relying on the second and third publications of the poem in *The Germ* and *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* rather than the earliest rendition (Figure 9). While the later two are slightly different, each poem consistently maintains that the Blessed Damozel 'leaned [or 'lean'd' in the latter version] out/From the gold bar of heaven,' which was silver in the initial version of 1847. The rough painting shows that Burne-Jones had also made an attempt to depict accurately the layers of heaven and divine characters of the Virgin Mary's saintly handmaidens 'weaving golden thread/To fashion the birth-ropes for them/Who are just born, being dead'. This early draft sketch echoes the composition of Hunt's illustration, where he used the bottom grave scene to show the nuns passing in the distance, 'singing *Dies iræ* and *Beati mortui*' (Figure 7). Side-by-side, Hunt's illustration and Burne-Jones's golden sketch almost seem to reflect one another. However, Burne-Jones would decide against this composition and simplified the scene, concentrating singularly on the composition of the woman.

At this point, *The Blessed Damozel* and its textual source – as well as the early Burne-Jones painting and the Hunt illustration – might seem to have little compositional and conceptual relation other than their foundational stories. However, I argue that the subtlety of their relation, inverted by Burne-Jones, will be what binds them together in an intricate new vision for art based on theology. First, we must consider how Burne-Jones is making a direct intervention on Rossetti's 'double' art works of painting and poetry. Many of Rossetti's paintings crossover and even overlay text, questioning, as David Peters Corbett discusses, the

possibility to discern the reality of the ideal in the real by posing new relations between world and image, textuality and visuality.³⁷⁸ However, by the time Burne-Jones is painting, Rossetti has not painted his version of ‘The Blessed Damozel’ and will not do so until 1875-8. By choosing this subject, Burne-Jones is joining Rossetti’s complex dialectic between textual and visual creation – an homage to his mentor and a deep engagement with him where Burne-Jones can bring some of his formative intellectual thinking into play. Burne-Jones’s words only shortly before in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* reflect his perception of the complexity of conveying such a story, and the potency for meaning in his version of the Rossetti poem. These words also become yet another textual relation of the visual work, bringing into play his own ideas and other models and references for the work.

I believe the Holman Hunt illustration he describes takes on particular significance in the uniqueness of Burne-Jones’s *Blessed Damozel* design. His words describing ‘My Beautiful Lady’ could be seen to reveal new relationships and hidden ideas when applied to the *Blessed Damozel*. The portion that tells of the upper scene, where ‘two lovers are together in a meadow, by a pool of standing water, and behind them a circle of trees is throwing morning shadows on the grass’ seems obviously disjointed from what Burne-Jones has depicted. There are not two lovers but one. However, they first share the basic similarity of the landscape: the ‘meadow,’ where each respective character leans ‘by a pool of standing water,’ with ‘circles’ of trees behind. The next section of the quotation develops what otherwise might be a superficial observation: ‘she is kneeling, stooping forwards to gather wildflowers growing on the bank.’ In the early oil sketch for the *Blessed Damozel* this also rings true. Over the pond she clutches sunflowers and is surrounded by fields of gold. However, this is all changed and reversed in the completed painting. This is where the final portion of the description illuminates the potential implications of that reversal. Burne-Jones

³⁷⁸ David Peters Corbett, *World in Paint: Modern Art and Visuality in England 1848-1914*, 49-51.

describes Hunt's 'My Beautiful Lady' as being 'clasped and circled by the arm of him who loves her and shall be her future lord, he is bending lovingly over her, shielding her from harm; yet there is no peril in the water, and the space between her and the edge is great, still he clasps her lightly, guarding her from a danger that is not: judge of it, O lovers! how true it is.'³⁷⁹

Since there is only one figure in Burne-Jones's painting, this again might seem like an observation particular to 'My Beautiful Lady' that is not and could not be applicable to *The Blessed Damozel*. However, the compositional change from the early oil sketch to the latter painting, while eliminating the hosts of angels and saints that encircle Mary in her grove, introduces a new figure – one that had been textually introduced in Rossetti's poem:

"Herself shall bring us hand in hand
To Him round whom all souls
Kneel, the unnumbered ransomed heads
Bowed with their aureoles;
And Angels meeting us shall sing
To their citherns and citoles.

"There will I ask of Christ the Lord
Thus much for him and me:—
Only to live at once on earth
At peace, — only to be
As then awhile, for ever now
Together, I and he."³⁸⁰

In the final painting, the Blessed Damozel leans over the 'gold bar of heaven,' that, though explicitly described earlier in the poem, becomes the 'second figure' that has been missing from the comparison with Hunt's illustration. 'Shielding her from harm; yet there is no peril in the water,' the bar separates her from the reflective surface that serves as a rainbow, translucent barrier from the earthly world and her lover. The overall composition thus hinges on the architectural unity of the bending female form and the bar with which she seems

³⁷⁹ Burne-Jones, 'The Newcomes,' 60-1.

³⁸⁰ Rossetti, "Blessed Damozel," 80-83.

eternally enjoined. Together, body and bar unify in a centralized cross-shape – her haloed, downward face is above the vertical trunk of the bar, which meets with the horizontal arms to create the distinct proportions of a crucifix. The crown in her hand also underlines the significance of the cross-form, appearing centrally in the cross as if referencing the heavenly glory of Christ himself, crowned as he was in thorns on the cross and in majesty thereafter in heaven. Indeed, we can see the evident theological association of cross and crown discussed by Newman in his sermon on ‘The Ventures of Faith’:

Alas! that we, my brethren, have not more of this high and unearthly spirit! How is it that we are so contented with things as they are, that we are so willing to be let alone, and to enjoy this life, - that we make such excuses if any one presses on us *the necessity of something higher, the duty of bearing the Cross, if we would earn the Crown, of the Lord Jesus Christ?*
[emphasis added]³⁸¹

In the crossing of heaven and earth in *The Blessed Damozel*, we see the meeting of celestial and terrestrial spheres in that cross and crown. The subtlety of the allusions unfold and enact themselves in these series of emphasised separations and unities made complete by the bar, which separates as it unifies, closes possibilities as it offers (im)possibilities. ‘As then awhile, for ever now/Together, I and he’ is thus convoluted with ‘Christ the Lord,’ as she is circled by the bar, by the arm of ‘him who loves her, and shall be her future lord.’ This plays up the Dantesque foundations of the poem. Indeed, the fundamental structure of the narrative derives from Rossetti’s project to translate and recreate much of his medieval literary hero’s work. However, Rossetti himself had reversed Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, focusing not on the journey of male lover that the epic describes but on the prayers of the dead female character, Beatrice – ‘The Blessed Damozel’. The original medieval poem used Beatrice as herself a threshold to seeing and revelation in Christ. Without Dante’s love of beautiful Beatrice, he

³⁸¹ John Henry Newman, ‘Sermon 20. The Ventures of Faith,’ *Parochial and Plain Sermons* vol. 4, 306.

could never experience the fullness of the eternal Godhead.³⁸² Similarly, Rossetti has described the Blessed Damozel on the ‘rampart’ or ‘terrace’ of ‘God’s house, staring ‘across the flood/of ether, as a bridge’ as saints played ‘at holy games’ behind her. “‘I’ll take his hand and go with him,’” the Blessed Damozel says as she petitions in her prayers.

To the deep wells of light,
And we will step down as to a stream,
And bathe there in God’s sight.
“We too will stand beside that shrine,
Occult, withheld, untrod,
Whose lamps are stirr’d continually
With prayers sent up to God,³⁸³

In Burne-Jones’s own work, he is uniquely depicting the beautiful iridescent surface of the water below her, the great swaths of gold, like the background of Renaissance altarpieces, behind her, and the parallel forms of the trees – one behind her in the garden of heaven, and the bar that forms the ‘tree’ of the crucifix. All these appear in the painting as mysterious symbols and compositional frameworks, and yet relate to the descriptions and narrative of the poem:

And see our old prayers, granted, melt
Each like a little cloud.
“We two will lie i’ the shadow of
That living mystic tree,
Within whose secret growth the Dove
Is sometimes felt to be,
While every leaf His plumes touch
Saith His Name audibly.³⁸⁴

While the poem ‘The Blessed Damozel’ begins with hope extended, as she ‘lean[s] on the gold bar of heaven’, it closes and ends with hope lost and tearful, as she ‘laid her arms along/the golden barriers,/And laid her face between her hands,/And wept. (I heard her

³⁸² Stephen Verney, *Water into Wine: An Introduction to John’s Gospel* (London: Fount Paperbacks, 1985), 135-140.

³⁸³ Rossetti, ‘The Blessed Damozel,’ 80-83.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

tears.)’ However, Burne-Jones does not focus on the final moment of drama and ultimate separation, but on the possibility of union bound up visually and theologically in the form of the cross. In the subtlety of its unfolding references, the image is structured around the cross, crown, and love of Christ. Therefore, this image is developing the potential for the artistic expression of ‘the secret of the marriage of the Lamb’, in which all is bound uniquely and specifically to Christ and ‘his marriage with his people’.³⁸⁵ Thus, the Damozel turns the heavens downwards, therefore turning earth upside down to meet in the intersection of the bar above the ether. It is a marriage of the two worlds by way of the cross and crown, to which the lover in heaven joins herself and quite literally em-bodies.

We further understand the import of this junction and its relation to the secret of the ‘marriage of the Lamb’ when we compare this complex image to works that we have discussed before. The leaning figure of the Damozel echoes most pertinently *The Prioress’s Tale Cabinet*, where access to Christ and resurrection is mediated through the figure of the leaning form of the Virgin (Figure 4). *The Blessed Damozel* offers the union through cross and crown of Christ’s redemption much as the Virgin Mary offers new life through the eucharistic grain of wheat. Furthermore, the leaning Marian figure which completes this eucharistic gesture is not only echoed by *The Blessed Damozel* but replicated in that innovative Annunciation design showing Mary bent over, clasping the dove of the Holy Spirit to her breast (Figure 6). Compared to the painting and cabinet, this particularly unusual design can be considered to represent this ‘marriage of the Lamb’ in its purposefully ambiguous use of the dove. Like the Damozel holding the crown at the cross and *The Prioress’s Tale* Virgin holding the grain of wheat, the Virgin Mary in the Annunciation clings to the very moment of immaterial materiality – when heaven meets earth in the incarnation. In this bending female form, Burne-Jones has shown the most intimate

³⁸⁵ Burne-Jones, ‘*The Newcomes*,’ 55-56.

intersection of heaven and earth, and the mystery embedded in the invisible ‘making man’ of God. Therefore, the dove held at Mary’s breast can be equated with the host consecrated in the mass, the very ‘making present’ of heaven’s union with earth in that present moment of the eucharist, and therefore follows the model of the ‘marriage of the Lamb’ discussed by Burne-Jones.

Thus, while not unanimous in their iconography or stories, the strange crossovers of the visual references and arrangements of these paintings attest to Burne-Jones’s continued interest in the mysterious potentials of portraying the secret of ‘the marriage of the Lamb’ in all subjects of art, ‘Scriptural’ or fictional. In these images, Burne-Jones seeks to encapsulate the ‘forgotten truths’ on which all beauty and relation to heaven must be founded. The profundity of the ‘great mystery, the secret of the marriage of the Lamb,’ is confirmed as his solution to the impossible separations of lovers, of earthly and divine, in *The Blessed Damozel*. This definition of marriage aligns with the discussion of sacramentality and the eucharist by the likes of Newman and Wilberforce, which continue to influence his earliest and latest ruminations of what art was meant to be. His depictions of men and women, heaven and the world, rely for their power to signify and to represent on this ‘holy thing’; their uniqueness from religious and ‘aesthetic’ art of his mentors and contemporaries stems from his particularly Tractarian view of sacramental signification. As discussed previously, this was experienced liturgically and even artistically by Burne-Jones at Oxford, and his studies and experiences at church – the masses, singing, vestments, art, and liturgy – were part of the ‘food’ Georgiana talks about in the *Memorials* that Burne-Jones gained strength from outside of the disappointing university curriculum.³⁸⁶ Understanding this gives us a deeper, visual sense of what Burne-Jones might mean when he uses the phrase ‘the secret

³⁸⁶ ‘He had quietly absorbed them – eating and passing on in the strength of the food. How deeply they affected him.’ *Memorials*, 1:58.

marriage of the Lamb' which all human marriage, and therefore love and along with it, art, should be founded upon.

Though Burne-Jones gives up theological education and vocation, his art never gives up this 'splendid venture' that Newman had set him on.³⁸⁷ He himself continues to insist upon it, and his art carries and enacts it in the subtle, inherently exegetical mechanics of compositions and narrative moments that suspend revelation, and in doing so, make its impossible distance a possibility readily available through the highest love offered by Christ on the cross and in the sacramental marriage with him that extends into and forms all of life itself.

³⁸⁷ *Memorials*, 1:59.

Chapter 3. Time of Transition: The Highest of All Examples

This chapter looks at Burne-Jones's next article in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, his defence of John Ruskin's *Modern Painters III*,³⁸⁸ and a further selection of early artworks: another stained glass design and *The Merciful Knight*, a large watercolour that, for Georgiana, 'summed up and sealed' this period of Burne-Jones's life.³⁸⁹ Burne-Jones's second article in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* will be seen as yet another example of the extension of Burne-Jones's theological education as it translates into artistic ideas. Thus, this chapter will introduce Burne-Jones's attraction to Ruskin's ideas and his own interpretation of art and artistic themes, textually and then visually. Notions related to how Burne-Jones may be framing his early artistic project will be analysed alongside questions of what it means to draw, develop, and 'figure' images, theologically and artistically. As this chapter shows, Ruskin becomes a point of reference for the transfer of religious principles into art; however, a continued comparison to the theology of John Henry Newman and the Tractarians will allow us to inquire why Burne-Jones may be interpreting artistic and theological ideas in a way unique from Ruskin. Therefore, we may begin to see how Burne-Jones's defence of the writer of *Modern Painters* leads him to an articulation of theological ideas that will be distinct in his own art as early as works such as *The Good Shepherd*, *The Wise and Foolish Virgins*, and finally, *The Merciful Knight*.

Mr. Ruskin's New Volume

John Ruskin's theological perspective differed considerably from that of Burne-Jones, being raised thoroughly Evangelical and attending churches such as Beresford Chapel,

³⁸⁸ Burne-Jones, 'Mr. Ruskin's New Volume,' *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* (1856), The Rossetti Archive <http://www.rossettiarchive.org/docs/Burne-Jones004.raw.html>.

³⁸⁹ *Memorials* 1:262.

Walworth Road.³⁹⁰ Coincidentally, Burne-Jones himself would remember attending this church while visiting his aunt in London. It was a church of a completely different spectrum than those of his preference, and just going to Beresford Chapel put him in such ‘gloomy darkness’.³⁹¹ Therefore, the two men posed quite a contrast, especially when we consider Ruskin’s outspoken revulsion of the Anglo-Catholic medievalism of the Oxford Movement.³⁹² In his defense and mentorship of the young Pre-Raphaelite Movement of 1851, he would dissuade them from potential ‘Tractarian’ tendencies in favour of increased observation of nature.³⁹³ Despite this, Burne-Jones, a devotee of Newman, Pusey, and Wilberforce, would become one of Ruskin’s most ardent followers, students, and close friends. In fact, Burne-Jones’s article would be the beginning of what would turn into their friendship. It was after reading the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* and this article on *Modern Painters* that Ruskin would strike up correspondence with Burne-Jones that would continue for a lifetime.³⁹⁴ While other Pre-Raphaelites might not have been able to balance their own independent artistry with Ruskin’s often too-domineering patronage, Burne-Jones managed to amalgamate Ruskin’s ideas and friendship while maintaining ideas of his own. In examining this early essay on Ruskin, we can begin to question how Burne-Jones shapes his own theological viewpoint in relation to ideas about work, religiosity, and art.

³⁹⁰ *Memorials* 1:262.

³⁹¹ *Memorials*, 1:40.

³⁹² For more on Ruskin’s religious background and later ‘unconversion’, see Michael Wheeler, *Ruskin’s God* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); George P. Landow, ‘Chapter 4. Ruskin’s Religious Beliefs,’ *Aesthetic and Critical Theory of John Ruskin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971); Aidan Nichols O.P., *All Great Art is Praise: Art and Religion in John Ruskin* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2016).

³⁹³ Robert Hewison, Ian Warrell, and Stephen Wildman, *Ruskin, Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites* (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 2000), 14.

³⁹⁴ *Memorials* 1:127.

Burne-Jones's 'flatteringly eulogistic review' appeared only months after Ruskin had published the third volume of *Modern Painters* in January 1856.³⁹⁵ This essay differs from his *Newcomes* review in the sense that this time Burne-Jones intends to 'secure at least an abstract of the chapters touching High Art and the Ideal', and he outlines the general thrust of the book and quotes at considerable length from Ruskin himself.³⁹⁶ Nevertheless, it is similar in its tone; like Thackeray, Ruskin is positioned as a prophetic counter-cultural figure, who speaks 'truths pre-eminent and noble' over and against the 'critic-fogs' that 'come between us and God's light'.³⁹⁷ Burne-Jones also echoes some of his main ideas about 'the continual to-day',³⁹⁸ which in this essay's introductory paragraph is 'the example from the sky. Is this morning so very like the sky of yesterday [...]? It renews itself daily, and has not ceased to do so from the morning God spread it out for a covering to the earth. And in us also there are mines of measureless wealth, if we would rise up and work them'.³⁹⁹

At first, there may not seem to be much to interpret here about Burne-Jones's specific views, as he gives a fairly straightforward summary of Ruskin's layered discussion of ideals and types of art as they have been represented through history and in the context of current times.⁴⁰⁰ And yet, it is important to note that Burne-Jones, in all his youthful enthusiasm for Ruskin, builds up for himself a connection – laid initially by Ruskin – for the fundamental attachment of 'Art and Religion' in both sacred and profane art, in an artistic life outside a

³⁹⁵ Christian, "'A Serious Talk': Ruskin's Place in Burne-Jones's Artistic Development,' in *The Pre-Raphaelite Papers*, 188.

³⁹⁶ Burne-Jones, 'Mr. Ruskin's New Volume,' 215. In his previous essay, Burne-Jones did not quote from Thackeray at all and reviewed the actual contents of the book minimally (See Chapter 2).

³⁹⁷ Burne-Jones, 'Mr. Ruskin's New Volume,' 212.

³⁹⁸ Burne-Jones, *The Newcomes*, 52-3.

³⁹⁹ Burne-Jones, 'Mr. Ruskin's New Volume, 212.

⁴⁰⁰ Christian, when he mentions the article, reviews the contents of *Modern Painters III* but does not particularly speak about Burne-Jones's language or analysis of it ('Ruskin's Place in Burne-Jones's Artistic Development,' 188-9).

vocation within the church.⁴⁰¹ Ruskin revealed to him that while the demise of art and culture came with the ‘confusion of classicalism with Christianity...[which] divorced Religion from Art at once’, even profane art could be ‘intensely religious’ as long as men ‘cared chiefly for the chief truth’.⁴⁰² In subjects sacred or profane, in the three different forms of Idealism (Purist, Naturalist, and Grotesque), ‘Art and Religion, that at first were as thought and utterance to one another’ are ‘as soul and body’.⁴⁰³ Echoing his heroic evocation of the ‘godly crusade’ in his previous article,⁴⁰⁴ he eagerly puts himself ‘at the feet of Giotto and Orcagna, therefore, and Albert Durer,’ and declares that ‘the rule of faith in art’ is ‘once more established’ in the beginnings of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.⁴⁰⁵ His excitement is boundless, as he declares that their efforts are ‘ever mounting upwards to one end: the running stream becoming a great river, and the quiet light a burning torch; teaching lessons of purity, singing lessons of heroism, wakening into horror the fickle cruelty of unholy love...finding at last a consummation and happy fellowship in such thoughts as realized the “Light of the World”’.⁴⁰⁶ Again, here he is following to the letter the direction of Ruskin, especially as Burne-Jones quotes his ‘testimony’ regarding religious art with its current roots in Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites.⁴⁰⁷

What are we to glean of Burne-Jones at this stage in his artistic development, other than what seems to be his endorsement of Ruskin’s point of view? What contribution does this essay give to our understanding of Burne-Jones’s ‘theology of art’? Near the conclusion

⁴⁰¹ Burne-Jones, ‘Mr. Ruskin’s New Volume,’ 222.

⁴⁰² Ibid, 219.

⁴⁰³ Ibid, 219-222.

⁴⁰⁴ Burne-Jones, ‘*The Newcomes*,’ 53.

⁴⁰⁵ Burne-Jones, ‘Mr. Ruskin’s New Volume,’ 222.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid, 223.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid, 222. Burne-Jones quotes Ruskin when he says, ‘It will exist; nay, I believe the era of its birth has come, and that those bright Turnerian imageries, which the European public declared to be “dotage,” and those calm Pre-Raphaelite studies, which, in like manner, it pronounced “puerility,” form the first foundation that has been ever laid for true sacred art.’

of the review, Burne-Jones begins to point to a few specific examples of current artwork.⁴⁰⁸

Like his previous review of *The Newcomes*, we can begin to question specific elements of his interpretation of art. Doing so may give us not only insight into his enthusiasm for Ruskin and general ideas about the connection of art and religion but how those ideas may be put into practice and understood in his mind as working within art.

The Highest of All Examples

In this article, the central point is Burne-Jones's own extended description of William Holman Hunt's *Light of the World* – the 'highest of all' examples of the Pre-Raphaelite consummation of religion and art that Ruskin himself had cited (Figure 10).⁴⁰⁹ Shown at the Royal Academy in 1854, the painting of Christ knocking at the door was paired with the text from Revelations 3.20: 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and sup with him, and he with me.'⁴¹⁰ Though the text was included on the frame and in the exhibition catalogue, the work was not a direct illustration of that particular Scriptural passage.⁴¹¹ As Holman Hunt would discuss in the meditative reflection of letters and autobiography, the painting was allegorical in nature, bringing together many different Biblical references.⁴¹² The *Light of the World* was part of Holman Hunt's project, which was 'driven by his desire for both historical fact and meaningful fiction: narrative modes that the historicization of Jesus had enabled'.⁴¹³ His career and self-fashioning as an artist was repeatedly shaped by his 'quest for Christ', and

⁴⁰⁸ He begins with a few sentences on *The Huguenot*, *Ophelia*, and *Mariana* (Ibid, 223). These are interesting in themselves as comparison to his previous discussion on Hunt's 'My Beautiful Lady', analysed in the previous chapter (Chapter 2).

⁴⁰⁹ John Ruskin, 'To The Editor of *The Times*.' *The Times* 5 May, 1854.

⁴¹⁰ Judith Bronkhurst, 'The Light of the World,' in *The Pre-Raphaelites*, 117.

⁴¹¹ Ibid; Michaela Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible: Representation and Belief in Mid-Victorian Britain* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 147.

⁴¹² Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible*, 147. These other Biblical references include Romans 13:12 and Psalm 119:105, the latter of which compelled him to include the lantern in Christ's hand (Bronkhurst, 'The Light of the World', 117).

⁴¹³ Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible*, 134.

while divulging his own spiritual views he also sought to make the spectator involved as he depicted an open-ended and enigmatic scene in this particular painting.⁴¹⁴ Holman Hunt posed questions regarding Christ's physical and transcendent reality, and the work became a Protestant icon replicated in print and stained glass for decades to come.⁴¹⁵

Inspired by Ruskin's Edinburgh lecture, Burne-Jones visited the Royal Academy in 1854 and saw Holman Hunt's *Light of the World* and *Awakening Conscience* on display.⁴¹⁶ Burne-Jones was compelled by Ruskin's vision of the artist's 'priestly imagination', and these two Holman Hunt pictures of 'sudden revelation' – one sacred, one secular – made an impact on him.⁴¹⁷ 'Highest of all, the "Light of the World" Ruskin has called it,' Burne-Jones says in his *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* article:⁴¹⁸

...So new, but so familiar; those large mournful eyes, set in such sorrowful expectation, till the door shall open, the head slightly bending, even as it bowed upon the cross: it is the Son of Man standing before us, in all the beauty and sadness of our common humanity: we could call Him Brother, and inexpressively beautiful the thought seems to us: but another look, and it is the Son of God, risen and glorified, the royal crown upon His Head, and the royal robes enfolding Him, starred with jewels: so we are bowed down with awe before the Judge of quick and dead; yet there are signs of comfort, making the God whom we worship, and the Brother whom we love, one; and these are the crown of thorns budding with new leaves, and the pierced hands;- the perfect God and Perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. And while the heart is bowed downwards yet in silence, filled through and through with its glory, that wondrously lovely background, earth and sky together, comes upon one like a soft wind, when the brain is overwrought and fevered: the orchard, too, and fruit trees, till one remembers the written words of the wise king: 'As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons.' Have we not seen it many a time, that strange pale green colour in the sky at night, so bright

⁴¹⁴ Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible*, 128;147.

⁴¹⁵ Howes, *The Art of the Sacred*, 123; Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible*, 187.

⁴¹⁶ Christian, 'Ruskin's Place in Burne-Jones's Artistic Development,' 185.

⁴¹⁷ Corbett, *The World in Paint*, 26-7; *The Pre-Raphaelites*, 19.

⁴¹⁸ Burne-Jones, 'Mr. Ruskin's New Volume,' 223.

along the east that we know the day is coming? The stars up in heaven are very bright, piercing through the boughs till they seem to hang like white blossoms among the leaves, but above the Head is one, very bright and large and dazzling, and we know it for His star that led the wise men westwards, and think perhaps of the time when that star shone above Him, in the lowly stable of Bethlehem.⁴¹⁹

At the outset, it is interesting to note that Burne-Jones does not make any reference to the text of Revelation that was specifically included in the frame and catalogue of the work he had seen on display. Considering his previous article, in which he makes a quite explicit citation of the ‘marriage of the lamb’ of the Apocalypse, this could be seen as surprising.⁴²⁰ Furthermore, as a student moving from theology to art, he does not strive to make any contribution to a purely artistic analysis, and rather, by citing Ruskin, he moves to interpret the concepts within the image itself.

If we briefly turn to compare Burne-Jones’s analysis of the *Light of the World* with Ruskin’s famous defense of the work in *The Times*, a few points may be raised. Burne-Jones follows Ruskin in pointing out Christ’s various offices, as, in Ruskin’s words, ‘a prophet, priest, and king’.⁴²¹ Burne-Jones, however, does not point to this so succinctly and draws it out through his analysis, situating this point through a series of contrasts and comparisons of the different roles, playing repeatedly on the paradoxes posed by ‘another look’.⁴²² In this quotation, taken wholistically, we see him repeatedly return to a series of perceived paradoxes – ‘so new, but so familiar’, ‘the God whom we worship, and the Brother whom we love’; the ‘earth and sky together,’ ‘soft’ and yet ‘fevered’.⁴²³ Light also is another major theme in Ruskin’s letter to *The Times*; he directly points to the iconography of the lantern as

⁴¹⁹ Burne-Jones, ‘Mr. Ruskin’s New Volume,’ 223-224. I include this quotation at length to give the reader a sense of Burne-Jones’s use of language and the connection of ideas that will be broken down in my subsequent analysis.

⁴²⁰ See Chapter 2, ‘The Secret of the Marriage of the Lamb’.

⁴²¹ Ruskin, ‘To The Editor of *The Times*.’ *The Times* 5 May, 1854.

⁴²² Burne-Jones, ‘Mr. Ruskin’s New Volume’, 223.

⁴²³ *Ibid*, 223-4.

well as to the light glowing from Christ's head.⁴²⁴ For Burne-Jones, this is not quite as direct, and instead is involved in his description of the landscape and references to the star of Bethlehem at the Nativity.⁴²⁵

Though Burne-Jones seems to echo Ruskin, the points he makes seem to take on a different meaning and contain different referents. From the outset, Burne-Jones sees a Crucifixion; Christ is in 'such sorrowful expectation, till the door shall open, the head slightly bending, even as it bowed upon the cross: it is the Son of Man standing before us, in all the beauty and sadness of our common humanity'.⁴²⁶ In this he poses the contrast of God and Brother, and in so doing reflects upon the crown of thorns and pierced hands of a Christ that is also a royal priest.⁴²⁷ His solution to this contrast is a reference to the Athanasian Creed, which professes that Jesus is the 'the perfect God and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting'.⁴²⁸

We may question why it would be important for Burne-Jones to include this, rather than specifically ruminating on the symbolism of the light as Ruskin had or the explicit text of Revelation included in the image. The Athanasian Creed, as a key text in the history of the church included in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, arose as a defence of the doctrine of

⁴²⁴ Ruskin, 'To The Editor of *The Times*.' *The Times* 5 May, 1854. 'Now, when Christ enters any human heart, he bears with him a twofold light: first, the light of conscience, which displays past sin, and afterwards the light of peace, the hope of salvation. The lantern, carried in Christ's lefthand, is this light of conscience. Its fire is red and fierce; it falls only on the closed door, on the weeds which encumber it, and on an apple shaken from one of the trees of the orchard, thus marking that the entire awakening of the conscience is not merely to committed, but to hereditary guilt.

The light is suspended by a chain, wrapt about the wrist of the figure, showing that the light which reveals sin appears to the sinner also to chain the hand of Christ. The light which proceeds from the head of the figure, on the contrary, is that of the hope of salvation; it springs from the crown of thorns, and, though itself sad, subdued, and full of softness, is yet so powerful that it entirely melts into the glow of it the forms of the leaves and boughs, which it crosses, showing that every earthly object must be hidden by this light, where its sphere extends.'

⁴²⁵ Burne-Jones, 'Mr. Ruskin's New Volume,' 224.

⁴²⁶ Ibid, 223.

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

⁴²⁸ Ibid; 'The Creed of S. Athanasius,' *Book of Common Prayer*, 24-25.

the incarnation against heretics within the church by the Church Father, Athanasius.⁴²⁹ It is interesting to note that Athanasius was a key figure of the ancient, unified church for John Henry Newman, Burne-Jones's own hero. Newman not only dedicated many of his works to Athanasius, but repeatedly cited Athanasius in his many works and wrote the prefaces to, annotated, and translated many of the patristic thinker's treatises.⁴³⁰ Theologically, Burne-Jones's inclusion of the Athanasian Creed could pose further questions about his combined theological and artistic vision of Christ's unified divine and human attributes.

For Burne-Jones, then, it may be considered that Christ is not so much a literal 'light' but a revelation of combined natural and supernatural reality in the miracle of the incarnation. Thus, the incarnation, as the embodiment of God's relationship with man, could become the key for Burne-Jones to think about revelation and the religious nature and role of art. The actual text of Revelation becomes less important here, and instead, it is the theology of the revealed nature of God in Christ that is potentially being emphasised. In this, he could be following Newman. As previously discussed, Christ is repeatedly equated in Newman's writings with an 'image'; Christianity with the philosophical imagination necessary to comprehend that image; imagination with illustration; and, ultimately, God's creation. As an 'object,' Christ 'appositely illustrated the words of the text'.⁴³¹ Words and images are conflated in the divine process of revelation; of the 'Word made Flesh' in Christ as an 'artistic' concept of illustration, exhibition, and true knowledge of divinity made known in the visible, natural world. This kind of thinking points back to the patristic theology of

⁴²⁹ Athanasius, 'On the Incarnation of the Word,' *Christianity in Late Antiquity 300-450 C.E.: A Reader*, eds Bart D. Ehrman and Andrew S. Jacobs (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 200

⁴³⁰ *Historical Tracts of St. Athanasius* trans. Miles Atkinson with preface and notes by Newman (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1848); *Select Treatises of S. Athanasius, Archbishop of Alexandria, In Controversy with the Arians* trans. John Henry Newman (Oxford, London and Cambridge: James Parker and Co. and Rivingtons, 1877); John Henry Newman, *Arians of the Fourth Century* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1908).

⁴³¹ John Henry Newman, 'Sermon II: The Influence of Natural and Revealed Religion Respectively' preached 13 April 1830, Easter Tuesday, in *Fifteen Sermons*, 26.

thinkers like Athanasius. For them both, the incarnation of Christ as man, as a body, as an ‘image of God,’ was necessary in the divine scheme of salvation, the core tenet to which all Christian existence harkens back in resistance of evil and sin.⁴³²

In Newman’s ruminations, Christ’s existence as a physical image is further related to a special form of knowledge that Christ brings to the faithful through enlightenment and illumination. Jesus ‘brings together and concentrates truths concerning the chief good and laws of our being’ through the specific combination of natural human body and divinely-sent light.⁴³³ While flesh and light are both substances of the physical world, they are paradoxically opposed as elements on opposite ends of tangibility: the body is weighted by its earthly bounds, attainable yet weak; light, on the other hand, is necessarily elusive, within our vision but beyond and outside our physical grasp. Thus, Christ as a means of achieving divine knowledge in and through the natural world, is both. He ‘collects the scattered rays of light, which, in the first days of creation, were poured over the whole face of nature’; as ‘our Saviour,’ Newman says, He

calls Himself the Light of the world; as David had already said, in words which especially belong to this place and this day, ‘The Lord is my Light;’ and though he speaks of Himself as bringing religious knowledge to an ignorant and apostate race, yet we have no reason to suppose that He forbids lawful knowledge of any kind, and we cannot imagine that He would promulgate, by His inspired servants, doctrines which

⁴³² Athanasius, ‘On the Incarnation of the Word,’ *Christianity in Late Antiquity 300-450 C.E. A Reader*, 197. ‘For as when a figure that has been painted on wood is spoilt by dirt, it is necessary for him whose portrait it is to come again so that the picture can be renewed in the same material – for because of his portrait the material on which it is painted is not thrown away, but the portrait is redone on it – even so the all-holy Son of the Father, who is the image of the Father, came to our realms to renew humanity who had been made in his likeness, and, as one lost, to find him through the forgiveness of sins...’

⁴³³ Newman, ‘Sermon II: The Influence of Natural and Revealed Religion Respectively,’ 27; Athanasius had closed his treatise with a striking metaphor concerning seeing an exterior light. ‘But in addition to the study and true knowledge of the Scriptures are needed a good life and pure soul and virtue in Christ, so that the mind, journeying in this path, may be able to obtain and apprehend what it desires, in so far as human nature is able to learn about God the Word....For just as if someone wishes to see the light of the sun, he cleanses and clears his eye and purifies it until it is similar to what he desires, so that as the eye thus becomes light it may see the light of the sun...’ (Athanasius, ‘On the Incarnation of the Word,’ *Christianity in Late Antiquity 300-450 C.E. A Reader*, 200).

contradict previous truths which He has written on the face of nature.⁴³⁴

Thus, light allows divine and natural knowledge to cohere in sacramental unity, transforming earthly into divinity in the union of interior and exterior elements. Therefore, above all, Christ ‘reveals’ much as a ray of light necessarily will do; as much present in ‘this place and day’ as in the days of David. It shows what was, what is, and what will be – much as Burne-Jones sees in the *Light of the World* the ‘strange pale green colour in the sky at night, so bright along the east that we know day is coming’; or the ‘stars up in heaven’ brightly ‘piercing through the boughs till they seem to hang like white blossoms among the leaves’; and ultimately, the single star, ‘His star’ that in the past ‘led the wise men westwards’ to his lowly birth among farm animals. As a light, he is both high and low; one and all; past, present and future that is re-presented at each consecration and shines divine light on each day.⁴³⁵ Burne-Jones’s interpretation, then, could not be understood as simply about Christ as light, but rather as a rumination on the revealed reality of combined nature and supernature in Christ’s incarnation.

The Good Shepherd

This unique idea of light and revelation remains pertinent for questioning Burne-Jones’s own understanding of Christ’s theological and artistic significance as an image: first, in his textual assessment of a visual image of the *Light*, and second, in his own art works (Figure 11). In fact, Burne-Jones’s description can caption not only Hunt’s ‘example’ but one of his earliest commissions, a job designing a window for James Powell and Sons of Whitefriars.⁴³⁶ The consequent *Good Shepherd* design, made for later translation into stained

⁴³⁴ John Henry Newman, ‘Sermon I: The Philosophical Temper, First Enjoined by the Gospel’ preached 2 July 1826, Act Sunday in *Fifteen Sermons*, 4-5.

⁴³⁵ Burne-Jones, ‘Mr. Ruskin’s New Volume’, 212.

⁴³⁶ A. Charles Sewter, *The Stained Glass of William Morris and His Circle – A Catalogue* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975), 1-2.

glass at the Congregational Church of Maidstone in Kent in 1861,⁴³⁷ could be seen to illustrate Burne-Jones's interpretation of a 'Light of the World.' His cartoon is overall sober in tone; richly, yet carefully, chosen colours piece together a composition of a humbly adorned Christ. There is a dusky, amber glow to the picture – much like 'that strange pale green colour in the sky at night,' in Hunt's picture, 'so bright along the east that we know the day is coming.' Rossetti, the self-proclaimed 'Art-Catholic,'⁴³⁸ celebrated the design for its sacramental details, which together showed Christ 'as a real Shepherd, in such a dress as is fit for walking the fields and hills. He carries the lost sheep on His shoulder, and it is chewing some vine leaves which are wound round his hat – a lovely idea, is it not? A loaf and a bottle of wine, the Sacred elements, hang at His girdle; and behind him is a wonderful piece of Gothic landscape.'⁴³⁹ Its overlaid, interlocking decorative forms of foliage, and the literal patchwork of Christ's tattered attire abstractly simplify accessorizing elements like the bags, canteens, and straps into a unified whole. The design self-consciously anticipates its future translation into stained glass at the same time it attempts to capture the very minutiae of the scene and its central protagonist – a shepherd at once 'real' and beyond real, as 'a lovely idea' in a 'Gothic landscape.' Ruskin, Rossetti reported, also went 'wild with joy' at the sight of it – an appropriate response, considering how it expressed the full circle of multitudinous influences Burne-Jones embraced in both his textual and artistic expression.⁴⁴⁰

The self-consciousness of the design and all its quotations is key to understanding the significance of what it seeks to express as a window. Posited at once high king and lowly shepherd, heroic saviour and submissive servant, the figure itself is triply haloed: a hat on his

⁴³⁷ Destroyed; a second version was produced by Powell's for the Church of Saint Patrick in Trim, County Meath, Ireland, 1869 (Wildman and Christian, *Edward Burne-Jones*, 57).

⁴³⁸ Stephen Cheeke, 'What Did Rossetti Believe?' *Essays in Criticism* 63, no. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 148-176.

⁴³⁹ Rossetti, quoted in Wildman and Christian, *Edward Burne-Jones: Victorian-Artist Dreamer*, 56-7.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

head, a sheep on his shoulders, and a sun-like mandorla at his back. Like Hunt's *Light*, it seeks to reconcile both what is 'common' and what is 'royal' about Christ as both 'Brother' and 'Judge.' This is the profound unity of God and Man that Burne-Jones recognised in his text; that Newman before him had claimed as 'the Word, the Light, the Life, the Truth, the Divine glory...[that] had come on earth, suffered and died...[as] the Creator and Governor of the world, the Saviour, the final Judge of men.'⁴⁴¹ As a Good Shepherd rather than an explicitly majestic Light of the World, Burne-Jones's work echoes Hunt's painting, but tailors it to the particular context of stained glass design. It thus goes further to underline the paradox it seeks to resolve and consequently heightens the resolution of that paradox in the form of Christ as a literal embodiment of light. Historically, the Good Shepherd theme was never to be understood as the actual person of Christ, 'but as visual renditions of the metaphor employed by him to *cast light* on his *nature* and mission [emphasis added].'⁴⁴² The Church Fathers, from whom Newman repeatedly drew, highlighted the parable of the Lost Sheep, whose entanglement in the thorn bush paralleled the state of man, who ultimately requires Christ like the sheep who needs the shepherd. Christ as shepherd 'makes his way to us and takes the sheep onto his shoulders,' assuming 'human nature and as the God-Man he carries man the creature home to God' through his own sacrifice on the Cross.⁴⁴³ In his own discussion of Love, 'which forms...out of the rude chaos...an image of Christ,' Newman had recited a series of Biblical passages about the Good Shepherd that further emphasises the unified contradiction Burne-Jones could be evoking in his act of artistic exegesis:

'Verily, verily, I say unto you,' says the Divine Speaker, 'I am the Door of the sheep, and am known of Mine'... 'He that entereth in by the door is the Shepherd of the sheep'...It was

⁴⁴¹ Newman, 'Sermon I: The Philosophical Temper,' 28;35.

⁴⁴² Gabriele Finaldi, 'The Good Shepherd,' in *The Image of Christ* (London: National Gallery Company Limited, 2000).

⁴⁴³ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 33-4.

the regenerate nature sent down from the *Father of Lights* which drew up the disciples heavenward, - which made their affections go forth to meet *Bridegroom*...as they were cords of love staying the heart upon the Eternal [emphasis added].⁴⁴⁴

The success of Christ's reconciliation of paradox, and subsequently, that of the window Burne-Jones creates, can be fully understood considering his existence as a literal physical light: as a window in a church. While creating a richly coloured image evocative of Hunt's in style and composition, Burne-Jones does not directly internally figure the eternally impossible brilliance of the light as Hunt did in paint. Instead, by describing Christ in his role as both humble Good Shepherd and the Lamb of God, he could be pulling together the theological motifs of the 'Bridegroom' and the 'marriage of the Lamb' as well as that of the 'lost sheep', while also anticipating the inherent physical and conceptual light of the translucent window the design was destined to become. Making profound reference to the external invisible power of Christ and God Himself, Burne-Jones recognises and uses the power of actual light to animate the conceptualisation and execution of his work so that his humble Good Shepherd can become a representation of a divine Light for the World. Thus, the design embraces the exegetical possibilities inherent to his role, life, and mission in the greater narrative of incarnation extending into past, present, and future. Burne-Jones's Christ is necessarily 'translucent'; as a light he ultimately relies on the medium of 'divine' light for his 'physical' image to be embodied in art for the viewers of his day.⁴⁴⁵ Burne-Jones's drive

⁴⁴⁴ Newman, 'Sermon XII: Love the Safeguard of Faith Against Superstition,' preached 21 May, 1839, Whit Tuesday, *Fifteen Sermons Preached Before The University of Oxford Between A.D. 1826 and 1843* 3rd edition (London, Oxford and Cambridge: Rivingtons, 1872), 234-5.

⁴⁴⁵ Robert Sowers, *Stained Glass: An Architectural Art* (London: A. Zwemmer Ltd., 1965), 16. As Sowers mentions, there is a significant difference, especially in regards to stained glass windows, in the difference between *translucent* and *transparent*, with the latter indicating extreme clarity in allowing the light to pass through (as with regular, unstained windows) and the former indicating some distortion or diffusion of the passage of that light (being mediating through the stain and fragmentation of coloured windows). Here I chose to emphasise the *translucent* nature of the stained glass medium that becomes so wrapped up in the importance of Christ's conceptual and physical mediatory powers for Burne-Jones.

to be truthful to artistic medium could relate to a theological understanding of the ‘highest of all’ medium of truth – Christ as incarnated in the flesh by the light of God.

Bound indissolubly to the feet of God

Therefore, we must further understand the window design in relation to the theological and actual idea of restoring the church and its liturgy. In its material power as a translucent mediator of light and its material reliance within the actual and theological architecture of the church, the window is, in the words of Burne-Jones, ‘bound indissolubly to the feet of God.’⁴⁴⁶ Newman and the Tractarians repeatedly underscored the centrality of restoring the full virtues of God’s ‘visible church’ to its state in ancient times.⁴⁴⁷ Just as Christ was the physical manifestation of the invisible miracles of God, Newman would argue that it was necessary to maintain active, visual, and physical forms of individual and communal prayer. In fact, Christ theologically represents a new ‘Temple’ form within the salvation history of Old and New Testament. ‘At the moment of Jesus’ death, the function of the old Temple’ in Judaic world of the Old Testament ‘comes to an end...

Worship through types and shadows, worship with replacements, ends at the very moment when real worship takes place: the self-offering of the Son, who has become man and ‘Lamb,’ the ‘First-born,’ who gathers up and into himself all worship of God, takes it from the types and shadows into the reality of man’s union with the living God. The prophetic gesture of cleansing the Temple, of renewing divine worship and preparing it for its new form, has reached its goal.⁴⁴⁸

The ‘true house of God’ thus becomes the ‘risen body of Christ,’ around which the new Church and new Christian worship is centred in the consecration and reception of the eucharist.⁴⁴⁹ Thus, without Christ’s visible form, and without the visible forms of sacramental

⁴⁴⁶ Burne-Jones, ‘Essay on the Newcomes,’ 55-56.

⁴⁴⁷ Newman, ‘Tract 11: The Visible Church (Letters to a Friend) Letters I and II,’ *Tracts for the Times* (1834) *Project Canterbury* <http://anglicanhistory.org/tracts/> accessed 1 January 2017.

⁴⁴⁸ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 43-44.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 44.

worship seeking to commemorate and return to him, the invisible power of his presence would be diminished in the individual hearts of Christians and their lives within the social whole. This is what Burne-Jones lamented in his prior discussion of marriage and the ‘forgotten truths’ of Christ’s union with his people.

For the Tractarians, Anglican lack of ceremony corresponded with a lack of true appreciation of Christ, his incarnation, and his influence on the intellectual, moral, and spiritual state of England.⁴⁵⁰ Consequently, the physical character and make-up of the church environment featured centrally in their theology and reformation and reconstruction of the church and its liturgy. It was during this period the restoration and construction of churches old and new boomed.⁴⁵¹ In their desire to return to medieval forms of worship, medieval forms of church architecture and decoration took precedent. Burne-Jones had experienced this in Oxford, and his attraction to Tractarian discourse stemmed from his experience of the atmosphere of ‘higher’ services involving music, ritual, and Gothic architecture. In the broadest sense, a church has a powerfully unifying somatic force that directs all the multitudinous energies of decoration into a singular ‘destination space’; an unequivocal message and experience of interiorized sanctity.⁴⁵² This is particularly true of Gothic churches being built, rebuilt, and decorated at this time. The Tractarian attention to ritual led to an intensity of interior decoration leading up to and focused on the performative place of consecration at the altar. A window fits into this vision in a profoundly paradoxical way,

⁴⁵⁰ Raymond Chapman, ed. *Firmly I Believe: An Oxford Movement Reader* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2006); Owen Chadwick, *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement: Tractarian Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Sheridan Gilley, *Newman and His Age* (Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, 1990); Edward Sillem, ed. *The Philosophical Notebook of John Henry Newman* 2 vol. (Louvain, Belgium: Editions Nauwelaerts, 1969).

⁴⁵¹ Between 1835-1875, 3,765 Anglican churches were consecrated, either newly built or rebuilt. Jim Cheshire, ‘Space and Victorian Ecclesiastical Interior,’ *Craft, Space and Interior Design, 1855-2005*, eds Sandra Alfoldy and Janice Helland (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 27-32.

⁴⁵² Pierre Von Meiss, *Elements of Architecture: From Form to Place*, English ed. (London and New York: E & F Spom. 1991), 32;152.

reversing the interior ‘priority of destination’ in a way that nevertheless reinforces what Newman described as the church’s ‘visible’ relation to the ‘invisible’ church of God and heaven that the exterior light represents.⁴⁵³ If window design is approached with a full understanding of the ‘vision-inducing properties inherent in the intense light and colour of stained glass,’ the image can be given a profound ‘sense of evershifting figure-and-ground relationships that in itself tends to be transporting,’ illuminated not by reflected but transmitted light.⁴⁵⁴ Thus, the transaction of light between sacred human spaces and the divine spaces they seek to emulate is mediated through the interlocked mechanisms of the window and all the architecture that supports them and closes away human sphere from the divine one, much as the rituals surrounding the ‘marriage’ of the lamb in the eucharist does.

This attempt at design in the *Good Shepherd* would be Burne-Jones’s first of many stained-glass projects as an artist, many of which would return to the image of Christ at his various stages of his incarnation, passion, and resurrection. These would meet the continued demand for new church decoration, influencing the development of his broader artistic vision as he designed in other mediums. Arguably, his stained-glass designs evidence a constant consideration of a work and its contextually spiritual significance as a place of transaction, a threshold between worlds. As I shall examine later, his appropriation of compositional mechanisms between studies, whether for windows, paintings, or furniture, reveals his concern about the mediatory powers of a particular medium and its narrative within spaces of worship, whether explicit and implicit in the surrounding architectures of churches, homes, or frames. Burne-Jones’s understanding of imagery within the literal and liturgical context of

⁴⁵³ Von Meiss, *Elements of Architecture: From Form to Place*, 152; Newman, ‘Tract 11: The Visible Church (Letters to a Friend) Letters I and II,’ *Tracts for the Times* (1834) *Project Canterbury*, accessed 1 January 2017, <http://anglicanhistory.org/tracts/>; Sowers, *Stained Glass: An Architectural Art*, 7;11;17.

⁴⁵⁴ Sowers, *Stained Glass: An Architectural Art*, 32;28.

sacred architecture becomes central to his artistic practice. It is this type of approach that stems from an important theological *and* artistic tradition called *exegesis*.

The ‘Angelic Ideal’: An Architecture of Figuration

The act of exegesis takes a theological concept and extends it, layer upon layer, for contemplation. Many homilists and philosophers based scholarly theological work upon exegesis: for instance, the creative expansion of entire Gospels, or even single lines of Scripture.⁴⁵⁵ Steeped in the Christian tradition of contemplation and prayer, exegesis is also connected to mystic experiences and relates to practices such as *lectio divina*, and as we shall discuss shortly, key to how the famous artist-friar, Fra Angelico, created and others viewed his work in religious settings.⁴⁵⁶ Its connotations are highly visual and imaginative, structured by Biblical passages and Christian tradition, and expanded upon by an individual’s revelatory associations and imaginings. I argue, considering the innovations of the texts and works we have discussed thus far, that we can think about Burne-Jones’s understanding of imagery within sacred architecture as a development of what is a practice in theological exegesis. As shown above, the physical element of architecture provides Burne-Jones with a space similar to that of theological exegesis. Intellectually and physically, the architecture of the liturgy, church, and salvation history itself becomes the ground for imaginatively theological enterprises in art. Art is absorbed in what I call a systematically theological ‘architecture of exegesis’ that is at once bound and unbound by its own structural restraints much as the physical body of Christ and the ‘Visible Church’ in the sacraments is for Newman and the Tractarians. Burne-Jones’s interpretation of Ruskin, and work across media in the arts, could be informed by this understanding. This is where the so-called ‘Angelic’ ideal,⁴⁵⁷ which

⁴⁵⁵ Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁴⁵⁶ Drummond, *Divine Conception*, 15.

⁴⁵⁷ Burne-Jones, ‘Mr. Ruskin’s New Volume,’ 218.

Ruskin discusses at great length, becomes important for understanding Burne-Jones's consequent explanation and creatively theological exposition in the visual arts. The ideal, Burne-Jones paraphrases from Ruskin, 'called from Angelico, its central master,'⁴⁵⁸ is the first and highest, 'expressive only of the painter's love and veneration for his subject, arraying it in all devices of fair transparent colour and gold, setting off with whatever, in his great simple heart, spoke of power and majesty, so long the religious ideal was noble, and stands to this day unapproachable in its touching purity and solemnity.'⁴⁵⁹ Burne-Jones's interpretation, still glowing from having seen some of Fra Angelico's work in the Louvre during his trip to France, has certain echoes of the second volume of Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, when Ruskin speaks 'of unity,' for example:⁴⁶⁰

In the works of the early Italian men of *earnest purpose, who despising, or happily ignorant of, the sophistications of theories and the properties of composition, indicated by perfect similarity of section and gesture on the one hand, and by the infinite and truthful veneration on the other,* the most sublime strength, because the most absorbing unity, of multitudinous passion that ever human heart conceived. Hence, in the cloister of St. Mark's, the intense, fixed, statue-like silence of ineffable adoration upon the spirits in prison at the feet of Christ, side by side, the hands lifted, and the knees bowed, and the lips trembling together; and in St. Domenico of Fiesole, that whirlwind rush of angels and the redeemed souls round about Him at his resurrection, in which we hear the blast of the horizontal trumpets mixed with the dying clamour of their ingathered wings. The same great feeling occurs throughout the works of the serious men, though most intensely in Angelico; and it is well to compare with it the vileness and falseness of all that succeeded, where men had begun to bring to the cross foot their *systems* instead of their sorrow [emphasis added].⁴⁶¹

Thus a truthful and venerable 'perfect similarity of section and gesture' – a unified and beautiful composition - results, for Ruskin, by either their sheer naïveté or outright revolt of

⁴⁵⁸ Burne-Jones, 'Mr. Ruskin's New Volume,' 218.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid, 218; 224.

⁴⁶⁰ John Purkis, *Morris, Burne-Jones and French Gothic: Being an Account of a Walking Tour in France July to August 1855* (William Morris Society, 1988;1991); Harrison, *The Pre-Raphaelites and Italy*, 16.

⁴⁶¹ Ruskin, *Modern Painters II*, 54.

‘theory’ and composition itself, and rests wholly on the earnestness of their purpose, set in but not restricted to the cloister of St. Mark’s. His explanation shows how the paintings of this artist-friar would have spoken to all the Pre-Raphaelites on some level, conveying a noble ideal of artistic labour as a spiritual, rather ascetic one. However, Burne-Jones would have understood and been touched by these notions differently, having studied extensively the ‘systems’ of religion that Fra Angelico adhered to as a Dominican friar; that Ruskin puts out of his mind in the place of ‘great feeling’. These are the systems of the theology of the Church Fathers that were fundamental for the formation of discourse in reverencing and understanding the significance of sacramental signification that firstly, influenced Fra Angelico the Dominican friar, and provided the ground for the theology of Newman, the Tractarians, and Burne-Jones himself.⁴⁶²

Theorist Georges Didi-Huberman underlines this point in his scholarship on Fra Angelico by relating the fact that ‘figuration’ meant something completely different in the early Renaissance as we, and even Ruskin, understand it in more modern times. For those who engaged, read, translated, and based their arguments on the Church Fathers of a similar period, such as Newman and other Tractarians, this alternative, more ancient idea of figuration applies.⁴⁶³ Until as late as the fifteenth century in art, painting takes place in dialogue with ‘devotional practice and theological meditation’ on the fascinating problematic of the incarnation, which, to be comprehended, necessitates that thinkers and artists ‘figure’ the ‘enigma’ of divinity in reality by taking ‘distance from the aspect [of the figure] to

⁴⁶² Newman maintains both a need for a reliance on the systems of natural reason and language and a skepticism of over-rationalization that is held together by a ‘profound sense of the mystery of Christianity’ (Ker, *John Henry Newman*, 122). ‘Revelation... is not a revealed system, but consists of a number of detached and incomplete truths belonging to a vast system of unrevealed, of doctrines and injunctions mysteriously connected together...’ (Newman, quoted by Ker in *John Henry Newman*, 122-3).

⁴⁶³ Thus, Newman’s ‘idea of art’ is harder to trace, because it is not related to how we see figuration, but how ‘the image’ is conceived of in early Church, early Renaissance, terms.

displace [it]...to take a detour away from resemblance and designation’ and therefore ‘enter a paradoxical realm of equivocation and dissemblance,’ where ‘everything is excessively *material*.’⁴⁶⁴ Thus, by recognizing and underlining art’s own materiality, its inherent limits through ‘displacement,’ ‘detour,’ and ‘dissemblance’ within the space of the worship in the human world, painting becomes a ‘fabulous instrument for the overdetermination of meanings and a true exuberance of thought’.⁴⁶⁵ Art then gets wrapped up in the exegetical ‘poetics’ necessitated by the enigmatic narrative of the incarnation – of Word made Flesh, divinity made physicality, Christ in his humanity and Christ as the re-presented consecrated eucharistic host.⁴⁶⁶

Therefore, art’s relationship within and as a materially physical place - of impossible manifestation and the presence of absence - becomes vital for understanding how Fra Angelico’s works ‘figure’ the unfigurable, and by consequence, how Burne-Jones might gain inspiration from Fra Angelico on the deepest theological and conceptual level. This presents a more complex picture than the explicitly artistic compositional view that has Ruskin explaining away the perfection of composition as a lack of knowledge or desire for it. Instead it is the very ‘veneration’ that Burne-Jones heralds which functions within this systematically paradoxical theology of understanding – in this dialogue with ‘devotional practice and theological meditation’ - that Burne-Jones goes on to discern in his studies, his text, and his art. Veneration is itself the tradition of the one unified and ancient apostolic church of Newman and his cohort, of Burne-Jones’s own experience as a training minister and a devotee to the writings of the Oxford Movement. In his understanding, veneration is the deep

⁴⁶⁴ Georges Didi-Huberman, *Fra Angelico: Dissemblance and Figuration*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 3-4. The example Didi-Huberman cites in this particular portion of the introduction are the unexplainable blotches of paint that appear, disrupt and ‘displace’ the comprehensive reality of the picture.

⁴⁶⁵ Didi-Huberman, *Fra Angelico*, 3-7

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 7.

and profound love of the sacraments and the ‘secret’ and ‘forgotten truths’ they carry. Though masked in Ruskin as the ascetic simplicity of ‘great feeling’ that seems to at once achieve perfect composition while wilfully ignorant of how it could be achieved, ‘veneration,’ instead belongs to this very system – the exegesis – of figuration, of the fundamental discourse of the incarnation that allows one to more deeply understand the transformation of the elements in the acts of and surrounding the consecrated glorified body and blood of Christ. When Burne-Jones uses the notions of ‘veneration and love,’ they are co-equal, insofar as they are together as a superstructure of tradition, devotion, and theological thinking. They give ‘power and majesty’ to the ‘devices’ of the artistic mediums of colour and composition that make ‘Word Flesh’, and the immaterial, materiality. It is not the painter’s simplicity, naivety, or revolt against the ‘theories’ of art that produces it. Instead, it is the very subtle understanding of this Christian mystery to which Burne-Jones fostered when reading theological texts and attending churches, looking at Fra Angelico or Holman Hunt, and creating his own art. Therefore, the very medium, the systems of ‘devices,’ take on extreme importance in this artistic act, that *in itself* is absorbed in the physical context of veneration. Seen in this light, we can begin to decipher how he comprehends the minute subtleties of ‘the figure,’ of the work of art, within this broader, systematic network of exegetical meaning and exchange that he seeks to enact in his own work of ‘mystery’. The network of meaning and relations necessitate a use of this exegetical, heavily ‘material’ architecture in a like manner, in a sacramental way.

For his paintings and drawings in particular, exegesis will often take shape in the internal ‘digestion’ of architecture that at once embraces and subverts, and thereby exegetically extends, an idea of spatial reality and its relationship to divine ideals. This is profoundly realised in his relatively few paintings of Christ, where his *translucency* must be expressed alongside and mediated through an architecture like that surrounding a stained-

glass window. In a large 1859 drawing of the *Wise and Foolish Virgins* (Figure 12), Burne-Jones employs a mechanism comparable to Rossetti's large-scale drawing of *Mary Magdalene at the Door of Simon the Pharisee* (Figure 13), where the head of Christ appears inside a window of a distinctly separate architectural space.⁴⁶⁷ Burne-Jones, however, modifies the angle of Christ's head so that he is not in full profile; the more frontal, three-quarter view suggests a depth of space beyond that window that differs from planar flatness of Rossetti's depiction of Christ. This is a conscious change from Rossetti's work with consequent and significant effects, especially when we consider that Burne-Jones himself was highly involved in the creation of *Mary Magdalene* as Rossetti's model for the head of Christ.⁴⁶⁸ This difference, though small, has a profound effect on how Christ has been artistically conceptualized by Burne-Jones, allowing him to suggest the falling of light *outside* of the window's frame from the head of Christ head in what at first seems to be a surprising reversal of spaces that has light emanating *from the inside* of the structure rather than *outside* of it. Though subverting expectations, it performs effectively as a stained-glass window in that it emphasises Christ as a threshold and source of light, and it further underscores the architecture that builds up and creates a sense of sacredness founded on separation of earthly and divine worlds. Christ can only be viewed and understood as a 'figure' 'distanced' not only from the space of the foolish virgins but the human space of the viewer. Furthermore, Burne-Jones adds an open shutter to the window, creating a doorway between the space of Christ and of the Virgins, who kneel repentantly beneath his lighted image much as worshippers might in the hugeness of a church. In Burne-Jones's textual description of Hunt's *Light*, one of the powerful aspects of Christ was how he was 'set in

⁴⁶⁷ Christian and Wildman, *Edward Burne-Jones: Victorian Artist-Dreamer*, 61.

⁴⁶⁸ Herbert Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities: Manhood and Masculine Poetics in Early Victorian Literature and Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 141.

such sorrow expectation, till the door shall open.’⁴⁶⁹ Christ seeks to open the door of the faithful’s heart, and to cast his light upon it much as he seeks to guide his sheep as Good Shepherd. As such, he must at once occupy two spaces: both with and away from us as our guiding shepherd and illuminating light. As Pusey said, when lamenting of the sparse monthly service of communion in most churches, ‘While in the largest portion of the Church, the people mostly gaze at the threshold of Heaven where they do not enter, what do we? We seem, alas! even to have forgotten, in our very thoughts, that daily communion, which was the common privilege of the whole church’.⁴⁷⁰ Therefore, by emphasising the separation of spaces artistically through the architectural structures surrounding Christ’s image, Burne-Jones seeks to restore a sense of the profundity of the sacrament as that ‘threshold’ unto heaven, creating the ‘distance’ and ‘displacement’ necessary to materially suggest the potential for transaction between those spaces through Christ and his light as a doorway unto what is right, true, and Godly.

The Merciful Knight

An example of this particular idea is his work on *The Merciful Knight* (1863), which Georgiana said seemed to ‘sum up and seal the ten years that had passed since Edward first went to Oxford’ (Figure 14).⁴⁷¹ Exhibited in the Old Watercolour Society show of 1864, the final painting burns with chivalrous religiosity. Though the subject is Italian in origin, it is directly taken from *The Broad Stone of Honour* where British author Kenelm Digby recounts the story of a merciful eleventh-century Florentine knight who receives forgiveness from an animated shrine of Christ on Good Friday. A Cambridge man, Digby had converted to Catholicism in 1825 and devoted his life to writing about chivalry. For him, chivalry was the essential task of the young and pious which was ‘only a name for that general spirit or state

⁴⁶⁹ Burne-Jones, ‘Mr. Ruskin’s New Volume,’ 223.

⁴⁷⁰ Pusey, *The Holy Eucharist*, 28.

⁴⁷¹ *Memorials* 1:262.

of mind which disposes men to heroic and generous actions and keeps them conversant with all that is beautiful and sublime in the intellectual and moral world. It will be found that...this spirit more generally prevails in youth than in the later periods of men's lives.⁴⁷² The stories in books such as *The Broad Stone* and the *Mores Catholici*, published and republished as early as 1822, underlined the merciful gentleness of the medieval knight in his attitude of life, which above all else, was in the emulation and service of Christ. Digby's humble, repentant version of Christianity was controversially opposed to the particularly muscular form of belief institutionalised in the leading establishments of Victorian Britain.⁴⁷³ His approach posed an explicit threat not only in the blatant Catholicism of his personal belief but in its open reversal of what he saw as the morally depraved attitude standardized in most forms of authority.⁴⁷⁴

Both Digby works were a fundamental aspect of Burne-Jones's day-to-day life. Though he downplayed them as 'sillyish books both,' Georgiana recounted that he kept them 'in his own room, close to his hand, and often dipped into in wakeful nights or early mornings.'⁴⁷⁵ 'I can't help it,' he had said. 'I like them.'⁴⁷⁶ He had not been the only one to like them – scholar Mordaunt Crook has called the books the 'breviary' of the romantic and rebellious Young English.⁴⁷⁷ Ruskin himself went so far as to claim that he 'first learnt to

⁴⁷² Kenelm Digby, quoted by Mordaunt Crook, *William Burges and the High Victorian Dream* (London: John Murray Ltd, 1981), 20.

⁴⁷³ The 'muscular' Christian attitude was associated with a more evangelical Protestant outlook, Britain's imperial and missionary stance, and a particularly 'masculine' outlook on man's relation to God and the world. See, for instance, Charles Kinglsey, one of the main proponents of this outlook and antagonistic to Newman and the Tractarians, in his sermon on 'England's Strength,' *Sermons for the Times* New ed., reprinted (London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd, 1898). In *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), Donald E. Hall analyses this particular strain in Victorian thought and literature. See also Peter Gray on 'The Manliness of Christ' in R. W. Davis and R. J. Helmstadter, eds., *Religion and Irreligion in Victorian Society. Essays in Honor of R. K. Webb*, (New York and London, Routledge, 1992).

⁴⁷⁴ Allen J. Frantzen, *Bloody Good: Chivalry, Sacrifice and the Great War* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 130-1.

⁴⁷⁵ *Memorials* 2:56.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁷ Crook, *William Burges and the High Victorian Dream*, 20.

love nobleness' from Digby.⁴⁷⁸ Therefore, as Burne-Jones's first formal presentation of his artistic approach in an exhibited painting, *The Merciful Knight* reflects how he seriously sought to unify his variety of distinctly 'catholic' inspirations into a profoundly religious work of art quite literally and materially 'fixed' on the theological profundities embodied by Christ.

In Digby's text,⁴⁷⁹ the 'miracle' occurred at the shrine when the nobleman prayed for the forgiveness of an enemy he could have killed but did not when 'the remembrance of Christ, who prayed for his murderers on the cross, overcame the young nobleman'.⁴⁸⁰ In this moment of emotionally overwhelmed remembrance, the knight is simultaneously physically 'overcome' by the animation of the wooden Christ, who leans over to embrace him. This is the moment Burne-Jones chooses to illustrate artistically, summarising textually in an inscription on the painting's inner mat as: 'Of a Knight who forgave his enemy when he might have destroyed him and how the image of Christ kissed him in token that his acts had pleased God.'⁴⁸¹ His choice of phrase is significant for how we consider his final arrival at this particular depiction. He combines references to multiple points in the narrative - the Knight's forgiveness of his enemy, God's and Christ's 'pleasure,' and final forgiveness of the mercifully repentant knight – and ultimately makes them the same in the 'token' of the exchanged kiss. This choice allows Burne-Jones to exegetically weave together a variety of concepts inherent to the expansive (im-)possibilities of the Christ figure, at once dead, living, and resurrected as an 'the image' that he 'fixes' on a cross in a shrine and, ultimately, into a

⁴⁷⁸ Ruskin, quoted by Crook, *William Burges and the High Victorian Dream*, 21.

⁴⁷⁹ In this instance, I, like Frantzen, will be referencing the 1844 edition. As mentioned above, they were republished and revised repeatedly since their initial publishing in 1822. Since there is no mention of a specific edition or when exactly he acquired them initially, the 1844 edition seems like it would have been easily accessible to him within the timeframe of his readings in his youth, his adulthood, and his subsequent painting of *The Merciful Knight* (See Frantzen, *Bloody Good: Chivalry, Sacrifice and the Great War*, Footnote 37, 286).

⁴⁸⁰ Digby, quoted by Frantzen, *Bloody Good: Chivalry, Sacrifice and the Great War*, 132.

⁴⁸¹ Christian and Wildman, *Edward Burne-Jones*, 93.

conflated textual and visual reality that brings to life ‘the highest of all examples,’ ‘the forgotten truth’ of the ‘secret of the marriage of the Lamb’.

And yet this sense of ‘reality’ is suspended, held in doubt, and kept ‘secret’, when the words are compared with the image it seeks to describe – an image, in essence, that now becomes the image of ‘the image of Christ’ akin to the sacramental elements. In this double-image, that indeed describes the main subjects of Christ and the Knight, the main action and true climax of the narrative explicitly mentioned in Burne-Jones’s inscription – the kiss – is purposefully withheld from view. In a series of drawings for the painting (Figures 16-21), his decision to exclude it can be seen as no accident as he wrestles repeatedly with the extent of kiss. In one image, the knight reaches up to receive the impending union with Christ and the kiss is an evident eventuality (Figure 20). In another, their lips actually meet (Figure 21). This is explicitly and dramatically rejected in another drawing where he sketches the kiss but then rubs it out in the specific place where contact between Christ and the Knight is made (Figure 19). In the painting, he follows this rejection through completely: devoid of the ‘reaching’ gestures in earlier images, we cannot even know whether the kiss has been bestowed yet or not as our sense of the linear progression of the narrative is correspondingly held at bay in what becomes instead a moment of breathless hesitation. Can the painting itself, as an object, then be equated with the unseen kiss, as itself a ‘token’ of an impossible miracle of embodiment, transformation, and mercy conceivable only through the ‘dissembling’ mechanisms of ‘figuration’ Didi-Huberman had described as inherent to theological art, to the consecration and reception of the Divine and Real Presence described by Wilberforce, to divine creation itself?⁴⁸²

⁴⁸² Didi-Huberman, *Fra Angelico*, 3-7; Wilberforce, *The Holy Eucharist* (See Chapter 1, The Holy Eucharist).

This absent-presence paradox is inherent to the theological notion of Christ and the sacraments Burne-Jones had extensively studied and then proceeded to emulate in his art. Therefore, he does not simply reproduce his selected portion of the narrative. Rather his work is an exegetical exploration of ‘materiality’ itself that relates simultaneously to art and the material ‘translucence’ of Christ himself. As a figure, Burne-Jones depicts Christ in nothing but a loin cloth and the crown of thorns. His feet are still attached by nail to the shrine and as he embraces the knight, the gaping bloody hole where he had been nailed through his hand is depicted. Despite the indication of gore, however, Christ is still in a mode of transformation. Almost half-wooden, his flesh is discoloured and reflective while his hair and beard are etched with stiff, straight lines. He is therefore neither fully a man, with the muscles and fleshiness of a body, nor a statue, with the idealisation often associated with inanimate human figures in art. Many of these features line up with his earlier description of Hunt’s *Light* and his own depiction of Christ as *Good Shepherd*, which are worth recounting and highlighting yet again considering this new depiction:

So new, but so familiar...the head slightly bending, even as it bowed upon the cross: it is the Son of Man standing before us, in all *the beauty and sadness of our common humanity*: we could call Him Brother, and inexpressibly beautiful the thought seems to us: but *another look*, and it is *the Son of God, risen and glorified*...so we are bowed down with awe before the Judge of the quick and dead; yet there are *signs of comfort* [the kiss?], making the God whom we worship, and the Brother whom we love, one; and these are the crown budding with new leaves, and *the pierced hands*; - *the perfect God and Perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting* [emphasis added].⁴⁸³

At first glance, the aforementioned works – visual and textual - seem to have no common connection other than their depiction of Christ in his multiple forms. However, with ‘another look,’ he coheres in the paradox of his material makeup at one in the same with the paradoxes

⁴⁸³ Burne-Jones, ‘Mr. Ruskin’s New Volume,’ 223-224.

of his life story. Each picture is ‘so new,’ different from its precedents, but so profound because it is indeed ‘so familiar,’ relating to these essential, foundationally exegetical facts of the incarnation story and Christ’s transitory, ‘translucent’ material existence within it. They each are in touch with the processes of re-embodiment present in the power of the sacraments, most particularly in the eucharist, creating an art modelled after the ‘Word Made Flesh’; divine ideal into reality, into image.

Further, it is not just the ‘material’ of the Christ figure that is coordinated to convey his divine paradox. Arguably, it is the entire material consistency of the scene that, like a stained glass window, unfolds and folds into its own materiality an exegetical attempt to make the painting ‘unpretendingly’ a painting – the image ‘an image of “the image”’ of Christ. Through these mechanisms, the painting becomes a unified statement of what it is and what it is not; what it cannot be and yet what it essentially is: a miraculous act of creation and transformation embodied by Christ. Burne-Jones’s experiments with the ‘kiss’ itself – as a ‘sign of comfort’ woven into the profound attributes of Christ - is but a small fragment of a greater compositional orchestration that works endlessly to bear this unbearable load – ‘the burden of the great mystery.’

The painting has what scholars have identified as an ‘essentially two-dimensional’ structure that is compared, in subject and style, to Rossetti’s 1859 watercolour, *Sir Galahad at the Ruined Chapel* (Figure 15).⁴⁸⁴ There is no denying the two works, and thus the two painters as mentor and student, were in a direct and perpetual dialogue. However, putting aside narrative contrasts and comparisons, Rossetti’s image is an intense close-up on his hero while Burne-Jones’s backs away. In the painting and its preparations, Burne-Jones is evidently concerned with the architectural make-up of the scene: dimensional structures work

⁴⁸⁴ Christian and Wildman, *Edward Burne-Jones*, 93.

paradoxically to at once subvert and embrace the two-dimensional space of a canvas. The final work shows an off-centred, raised wooden shrine enclosed by four columns and a shingled roof. Steps lead the knight up to Christ, separating higher from lower worlds, and a door at once opens for the merciful knight and closes the pair against the outside world. He is careful not only to show the series of supporting columns below the floors of the shrine and its stairs but also places another mechanism of defence – a densely woven trellis – between the space around the shrine and the forest beyond it where yet another knight appears, this one on horseback. In this doubling ‘image of “the image,”’ it is hard to determine whether the knight is or is not the same knight that receives mercy from Christ (shown at a different point in the narrative), or the ‘enemy’ to whom the knight himself had granted mercy by not killing.⁴⁸⁵ The indeterminate status of this second knight, appearing as he does on the outer portions of the picture and yet immediately outside of the frame of the door, heightens the sense of paradoxical unity through the exegetical confusion of doubling because whether they are or are not the same knight, they are made one in the singular message of divine mercy.

Within the painting and its theological overtones, Burne-Jones’s preparatory drawings become significant evidence for the more subtle exegetical undertones (Figures 16-21). Drawings are themselves the earliest exchange of the creative act. They evidence not only the development of a work like *The Merciful Knight* from point ‘A’ to ‘B,’ but the actual physical process of how his idea, inspired by the word of the story, is made into the flesh, the ‘material,’ of the image parallel to ‘the image of Christ.’ To analyse them is to see the underpinnings of the picture and its otherwise unseen networks of exegesis that are of supreme importance to Burne-Jones and his deeply ingrained theological strategy of design. In each sketch, the compositional structures of this and other paintings, like the small gesture of the kiss, is moved around. Each movement affects the larger makeup of the composition in

⁴⁸⁵ Frantzen, *Bloody Good: Chivalry, Sacrifice and the Great War*, 135.

a coordination of all other elements with which it is inevitably interlocked. In the image of Christ directly kissing the knight, for example, Burne-Jones places the bulk of a high, square altar between them, paradoxically nullifying the intimacy of their gesture and making any further union impossible (Figure 21). The barrier also allows him to open up one side of the altar to the exterior world, as only two columns and an overhang appear over Christ but not the knight. This differs from another sketch, where, even though they do not meet in a kiss, the kiss is reached for and implied and nothing stands between them – here, the door appears as it does in the final painting, though it is taller, more prominent, and nearly closed from an exterior that is not depicted at all (Figure 20). This scene is charged, more intimate and thus must necessarily be made to appear more separate and protected. However, while separated, Burne-Jones loses the comparison and contrast with the outside world, and therefore, the true profundity of the transaction of a miracle on earth and the sacramental transformation of materials. Further, Christ in this instance becomes more human, and consequently, the exchange between the two figures is raised to a more potentially ‘dangerous’ level of ‘human’ passion.

Overall, where the ‘architectural’ element is less developed, the picture becomes more like Rossetti’s *Sir Galahad*, where the emphasis is on the simplicity of the human exchange of two figures as opposed to the complexity of many ‘figures’ working into the one and most important ‘figure’ itself – the painting as an ‘image of “the image”’ of divinity. The latter approach comes and will eventually be chosen to most fully embody the ‘translucency’ of this double-image, reflective of the ungraspable and yet apparent ‘translucency’ of the divine Christ himself. All details are subservient to this unified, and ever-expanding, notion of what the painting is seeking to do as a material. The narrative, quotation, and visual ‘moment’ were potentially selected for this reason and, with every shift, every detail continues to work itself into this disorderly-order working to show what is ultimately hidden much as the

decorations, vestments, rituals, and formularies do at church during the consecration of the host.

The exhibition of *The Merciful Knight* received harsh critique: the work stood in stark opposition to the Victorian desire for muscular, heroically masculine depictions of a victorious Christ and, above all, medieval knights, who were expected to be the brusque warriors idealized as exemplars for an intensely competitive imperial society.⁴⁸⁶ This was the romanticised, ‘merciful’ image of Christian service controversially proposed not only by Digby but Ruskin, and further, Newman, who would repeatedly underscore the self-depreciating humility of Christ and the subsequent humility of the true faithful:

Above all, in the New Testament, the Divine character is exhibited to us, not merely as love, or mercy, or holiness (attributes which have a vagueness in our conceptions of them from their immensity), but these and others as seen in an act of *self-denial* – a mysterious quality when ascribed to Him, who is all things in Himself, but especially calculated (from the mere meaning of the term) to impress upon our minds the personal character of the Object of our worship. ‘God so loved the world,’ that He *gave up* His only son: and the Son of God ‘*pleased not Himself.*’ In His life we are allowed to discern the attributes of the Invisible God, drawn out into action in accommodation to our weakness.⁴⁸⁷

Human weakness, its continual repentance and sole resolution in Christ, was thus central to Newman’s ideal of piety, of Pusey’s language in ‘The Holy Eucharist a Comfort to the Penitent,’ and all the notions surrounding the monumental power and forgiveness of Christ in the sacraments.⁴⁸⁸ Therefore, these perspectives are connected to Burne-Jones’s attraction to the art and philosophies of Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites. His Christ in *The Merciful Knight*, much as *The Good Shepherd*, bears the weight of our ‘common humanity’. At once sad and beautiful, he is also above else ‘the door’ and threshold through which the light of

⁴⁸⁶ Frantzen, *Bloody Good: Chivalry, Sacrifice and the Great War*, 136-8; Arscott, *William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones: Interlacings*, 55.

⁴⁸⁷ Newman, ‘Sermon II: The Influence of Natural and Revealed Religion Respectively,’ 25-6.

⁴⁸⁸ See Chapter 3, ‘The Holy Eucharist’.

divinity passes – a translucent, reflective window within a complex architecture – a marriage of physical and theological experience.

It is also important to note where Burne-Jones has placed his signature – a small but significant point for the artist, especially one so young and thinking of his debut in an exhibition. He inscribed his name and the date in gothic font at the very bottom portion of the picture, below the staircase to the shrine where the knight's feet rest. Acting almost like a votive figure, the signature itself works to make the image, and therefore Christ himself, 'present' for viewers in the year 1863. Furthermore, it is a specific citation that connects Burne-Jones, as theologian-turned-artist, to the mercifully kneeling knight who prays and acts in service of God and Christ. In this sense, Burne-Jones-as-knight bends to Christ, who extends his love to him as he would in the consecrated elements at communion. This is the posture, the ritual, the moment where wood turns to flesh like bread becomes body, becomes Christ resurrected and offered onto every recipient of the eucharist. This could be seen as the sign and 'continual symbol' that may embrace the Tractarian ideal of the ever-repentant Christian and the Ruskinian Pre-Raphaelite notion of the 'Angelican' artist-friar. Burne-Jones therefore borrows Digby's narrative so to absorb its mood of controversially spiritual humility, of sacramental adoration, much in line with the theological teachings of Newman. Thus, Burne-Jones creates an image of Christ that pertinently possesses, 'sums up and seals' in Georgiana's words, an intellectual framework he has learned and will carry with him in artistic formulations moving forward.

Chapter 4. The Architecture of Annunciation

In Chapters 2 and 3, I argued that Burne-Jones's theological formation carried over through his transition to life as an artist. In this chapter, I argue the theological influences of this transition period continue to mature as his art matures. Much as Chapter 1 introduced the factual evidence surrounding his theological formation, this chapter will present many of the coinciding facts of his artistic formation to show the continuity, potential dissonances, and development of a 'theology of art'. However, unlike Chapter 1, the consideration of the artworks of his mature period will structure the argument. For the context of this thesis, Marian imagery is an anchor at which to begin in this middle portion of his career. In the vast and varied productions made at this point in his life, unique images of Mary appear in his work. Further, an investigation of his consideration of Mary in art allows a comparison and contrast with works discussed in previous chapters and in the one to follow. It is during this middle and late stage in his life, particularly after the extramarital affair with Maria Zambaco and his withdrawal from the Old Watercolour Society, Burne-Jones appears not to have cared much either for the reception or popularity of his art or conventional religious practice. However, he would profess his preference for public, religious works, declaring 'I want big things to do and vast spaces, and for common people to see them and say Oh! – only Oh!'⁴⁸⁹ He further lamented that 'the chance of doing public work seldom comes to me, if I could I would work only in public buildings and in choirs and places where they sing.'⁴⁹⁰ An analysis of his dedication and concern for his work in the context of churches reveals a picture in which we may more deeply understand his vision for art that has profoundly theological undertones. By focusing this analysis on Burne-Jones's image of Mary, we can begin to question how he can be seen refining and developing a distinct theology of creation that

⁴⁸⁹ *Memorials*, 2:13.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

pivots and builds on the incarnational and sacramental notions reflecting patterns of thought he had studied in the Tractarians and John Henry Newman, as well as in the art witnessed during his travels to Italy. This analysis shall move towards an understanding of how Burne-Jones's time of theological formation and transition into art has implications on his later career, so much so that we may understand his work not as a 'religion of art' but rather a 'theology of art', that at its core, does the work of theological inquiry on the relationship of what I have thus far termed, 'love between worlds'.

Italian Decades

From the end of the 1850s and to the early years of the 1870s, Burne-Jones was travelling repeatedly to Italy. Much as places had made a decisive impact on his desire to pursue a particular strain of theological study – at Hereford Cathedral – and a particular strain of art – at Beauvais Cathedral in France – his time in Italy would be a turning point for the development of his artistic pursuits. Scholars have looked at this period specifically to identify Burne-Jones as one of the truest of the 'Pre-Raphaelites' in the sense that, of all the 'Brotherhood' before and contemporary to him, he was the most loyal to the idea of learning from the art before Raphael as he studied it first-hand.⁴⁹¹ The direct associations between the Italian artworks he copied and the Neoclassical vision those often embodied is not of my main concern here – this has been dealt with repeatedly by scholars in books and articles on Burne-Jones.⁴⁹² However, it is important for this thesis to show how he developed, after viewing the great masters of – mostly religious – art, his own vision of beauty in art.

The 1860s brought his most frequent visits to Italy. Right after the formation of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. in 1861, and his extensive, almost daily, studies of

⁴⁹¹ Colin Harrison and Christopher Newall, *The Pre-Raphaelites and Italy* (London: Lund Humphries, 2010).

⁴⁹² Elizabeth Prettejohn, *Old Masters, Modern Painters: The Art of Imitation from the Pre-Raphaelites from the First World War* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2017); Liana de Giorlami Cheney, 'Edward Burne-Jones' "Andromeda": Transformation of Historical and Mythological Sources.' *Artibus et Historiae* 25, no. 49 (2004): 197-227.

manuscripts and marbles in the British Museum during these early years, his visit to Italy with Ruskin in 1862 was pivotal for his education as an artist. Visiting places from Rome to Venice and Milan, Burne-Jones not only made the copies as Ruskin directed but in his own style ‘attained a Venetian quality...a cloying sweetness...[and] a sense of stillness,’ the latter of which stayed with him until his late career.⁴⁹³ It was the distinct atmosphere of Italy, its art, and religion that brought at once a new gravity and brightness to Burne-Jones’s work as he quite literally worshipped at the altars of churches filled with overwhelming religious art, as Georgiana reproduced an account of his experience there in the *Memorials*:

I am drawing from a fresco...that has never been seen since the day it was painted, in jet darkness, in a chapel where candlesticks, paper flowers and wooden dolls abound freely. Ruskin...has wheedled the very candlesticks off the altar for my use, and the saint’s table and his [*sic*] everything that was his, and I draw every day now by the light of eight altar candles; also a fat man stands at the door and says the church is shut if anybody comes, and when the priest himself put his head in, the fat man said ‘hush-sh-shsh!’ and frightened poor priest away!⁴⁹⁴

Here, amid the ‘paper flowers and dolls’ of the abundance of Italian Catholicism, Burne-Jones sets the scene of the sacredness of his encounter with religious art. With the ‘fat man’ guarding the sanctity of the space against any intruders, this moment sketching at the altar becomes a religious service, with ‘eight altar candles’ and even the ‘poor priest’ respectfully distant – frightened away – from the chapel and its frescos.

Burne-Jones, like John Henry Newman and many other eighteenth and nineteenth-century English ‘tourists’ before him, had a complex relationship with Italian Catholicism.⁴⁹⁵ Indeed, even in this quotation there is an emphasis on the perceived ridiculousness, the overabundance, at the altar – the ‘paper flowers and wooden dolls’ abounding ‘freely’.

⁴⁹³ Christian and Wildman, *Edward Burne-Jones*, 84.

⁴⁹⁴ *Memorials* 1:248.

⁴⁹⁵ Jeremy Black, *Italy and the Grand Tour* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003); Ker, *John Henry Newman*, 68-9.

However, Burne-Jones would have had certain sympathies with the Catholic rite of the mass. Only six years before, Burne-Jones was grappling with the possibility of leaving the Anglican church, and, later on, he would recount his attending a Catholic church in his youth, reverencing the beauty but let down that it was all ‘wicked’ from the Church of England perspective in which he was raised.⁴⁹⁶ As discussed in earlier chapters, his affinity for the controversial services of the Tractarian Movement, his preference for controversial churches in Birmingham and Oxford placed him on tenuous ground denominationally. Indeed, he could be at a point where he could flexibly and creatively build upon the inherently visual experiences of his deep theological study to construct a theology – and an art - of his own.

In 1863, Burne-Jones completed his major work on *The Merciful Knight*, discussed in the previous chapter (Figure 13). It was influenced by the brightness of Venetian colouring he had studied during his most recent Italian trip. Furthermore, it was a very personal interpretation of religious encounter likewise impacted by his intense experience with Italian religious art. The choice of the story of the Italian knight, told by an English author, meeting with this miraculous shrine and its transformation into Christ himself, says much about Burne-Jones’s own reflection of his experience at the altars and shrines of Italian religion and art. As aforementioned, it was signed near the place of the knight, which becomes a representation of Burne-Jones and his interests. As Georgiana mentioned, it was thought to ‘sum up and seal’ the era that came before it – his religious study in Birmingham and Oxford, his visits to France, his early initial time studying with Rossetti and this recent escapade to Italy.⁴⁹⁷ However, it also sets the tone for his work moving forward in the decades to follow and can be considered a commentary on the relationship of the artist and his work.

⁴⁹⁶ Lago, *Burne-Jones Talking*, 50.

⁴⁹⁷ *Memorials*, 1:262.

John Henry Newman and Mary as ‘Pattern of Faith’

In Chapters 2 and 3, we used a pair of significant texts by Burne-Jones to begin to unpack a selection of some of his earliest artworks. The chapters focused on eucharistic themes of the ‘marriage of the Lamb’ in Chapter 2 and the potency of the very image of Christ, the Light of the World and the ‘Highest of All Examples’, in Chapter 3. As discussed in Chapter 1, these theological notions were important to Burne-Jones in his earliest formative education, and found their cohesion, complexity, and potency in the incarnation, central to the theology of John Henry Newman, the ‘great symbol of a man’ that led Burne-Jones on his ‘one splendid venture’.⁴⁹⁸

While Burne-Jones was travelling between England and Italy, studying in the British Museum, producing major watercolours for exhibition, and designing extensively in stained glass for churches throughout England, John Henry Newman was publishing some of his most widely read and controversial works. His *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* – a personal biography explaining his religious conversion⁴⁹⁹ – in 1865-6, his Letter to Pusey (*Discourse to Anglicans*) defending the sacraments and the Virgin Mary,⁵⁰⁰ a purgatorial poem, the *Dream of Gerontius* in 1865,⁵⁰¹ and his *Grammar of Assent*, describing the underlying philosophy of assenting to the Catholic faith, in 1870.⁵⁰² In light of this major activity during this period, and Burne-Jones’s developing maturity as an artist, Burne-Jones’s words on Newman from around this period are significant to reconsider as we move forward into the art of his maturity. Standing for him as a ‘man who never stooped, and who put all this world’s life in

⁴⁹⁸ *Memorials*, 1:59.

⁴⁹⁹ John Henry Newman, *Newman’s Apologia Pro Vita Sua The Two Versions of 1864 and 1865* (Oxford: Henry Frowde, 1913).

⁵⁰⁰ Newman, ‘A Letter Addressed to the Rev. E.B. Pusey, D.D., on Occasion of His Eirenicon,’ *Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching*, vol. 2 1874 (New York and Bombay: Longmans, Green and Co., 1900).

⁵⁰¹ Newman, *The Dream of Gerontius* (1865) 2nd ed. (Oxford: Family Publications, 2009).

⁵⁰² Newman, *An Essay in the Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (1870) (Assumption Press, 2013).

one splendid venture, which he knew as well as you or I might fail, but with a scorn of everything that was not his dream',⁵⁰³ Burne-Jones echoed Newman, for example, when he preached:

...Doubt we cannot, that the ventures of all Christ's servants must be returned to them at the Last Day with abundant increase...No one among us knows for certain that he himself will persevere; yet every one among us, to give himself even a chance of success at all, must make a venture. As regards individuals, then, it is quite true, that all of us must for certain make ventures for heaven, yet without the certainty of success through them. This, indeed, is the very meaning of the word "venture;" for that is a strange venture which has nothing in it of fear, risk, danger, anxiety, uncertainty. Yes; so it certainly is; and in this consists the excellence and nobleness of *faith*; this is the very reason why *faith* is singled out from other graces, and honoured as the especial means of our justification, because its presence implies that we have the heart to make a venture.⁵⁰⁴

So, even while Burne-Jones has moved out of the direct influence of Newman, the controversial Catholic, declared a Cardinal 12 May 1879, would remain in Victorian headlines and within Burne-Jones's distinct memories and sight. Therefore, Newman's theological interests during this later period of his life and mature period of Burne-Jones's, provide an interesting comparative framework against which we can contrast and develop an idea of Burne-Jones's own theologically artistic worldview.

Marian theology and imagery are an important point of reference at which to begin in this middle portion of his life. After the 1854 Papal definition of Mary's Immaculate Conception, Victorian debates on the role of the Virgin Mary and the veneration of her – often termed 'Mariolatry' by those antagonistic to the perceived 'catholic' 'worship' of her – reached a new height.⁵⁰⁵ Further, as a figure that recurred frequently in Newman's thought as

⁵⁰³ *Memorials*, 1:59.

⁵⁰⁴ Newman, 'Sermon 20. The Ventures of Faith,' *Parochial and Plain Sermons* vol. 4, 296.

⁵⁰⁵ See Adelbert Deneaux and Nicholas Sagovsky, eds. *Studying Mary: Reflections on the Virgin Mary in Anglican and Roman Catholic Theology and Devotion. The ARCIC Working Papers* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2007); Carol Engelhardt Herringer, *Victorians and the Virgin Mary: Religion and Gender in England, 1830-85* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2008).

an exemplar model of faith and for her integral role in his study of the ancient church and the scheme of the incarnation itself, she can be seen to become the very *material* out of which Christ and all of salvation for humankind, was crafted and came to fruition. Ultimately, in the vast and varied productions made at this point Burne-Jones's career, unique images of Mary appear repeatedly in private and public works. It is in the dialogue between private and public, exhibition and church commission, theological debate and artistic design, we will investigate the potential for an artistic theology at work within his figural depictions of Mary and the expansive possibilities for what I call an 'Architecture of Annunciation.'

If we merely reflect on his early works featuring Marian themes, we already have seen an undercurrent of potentially controversial and yet what he would consider highly original 'innovations'.⁵⁰⁶ The unexpected appearance of a tale of a Marian apparition on a wedding cabinet (Figure 4, 1859); the first version of the altarpiece for St. Paul's, Brighton, with the central 'eucharistic' gathering flanked by densely worked panels depicting Annunciation (Figure 5, 1861); and the Annunciation window for Butterfield that featured Mary clasping the dove of the Holy Spirit to her breast (Figure 6, 1860) – all these pictures posed problems, confusions, and ultimately, created unique works that succeeded, above all else, in conveying a sense of mystery firmly rooted in the religious discourse considering Mary and her significance in Christian theology. Indeed, the role of Mary in the Church was heatedly debated at the time of Burne-Jones's own university education. The very year he was deciding to leave or remain at the University of Oxford, the *Ineffabilis Deus* – the Immaculate Conception – was proclaimed in Rome and Anglicans were further divided from the 'papist' 'marioloters' on this matter.⁵⁰⁷ Central to the notion of the Immaculate Conception was the fact that Mary was 'conceived without sin'. This followed upon

⁵⁰⁶ Lago, *Burne-Jones Talking*, 28.

⁵⁰⁷ Pope Bl. Pius IX 'Ineffabilis Deus: The Immaculate Conception' *Papal Encyclicals Online*, accessed 1 November 2018, <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius09/p9ineff.htm>.

Gabriel's proclamation 'Hail Mary, full of grace', which led to the conclusion that Mary was the purest, cleanest 'vessel' – the only potential vehicle – for Christ's very embodiment. It followed the logic that not only Christ was conceived immaculately – by the Holy Spirit in a Virgin who maintained her virgin purity – but that even before his conception, she would have to be free from sin.⁵⁰⁸ As the very *material* that gave *an image* to the divine *Word*, Mary was a controversial but important figure for theological discourse and would be a pertinent metaphor, the exact illustration, of the exchange between heaven and earth, the relation of ideal to real, and the embodiment and manifestation of divine love. In Newman's *University Sermons*, he goes so far to call 'St. Mary...our *pattern* of faith'

...both in the reception and in the study of divine truth. She does not think it enough to accept, she dwells upon it; not enough to possess, she *uses* it; not enough to assent, she *develops* it; not enough to submit to reason, she *reasons upon it*; not indeed reasoning first and believing afterwards, with Zacharias, yet first believing without reasoning, next *from love* and reverence, reasoning after believing. *And thus she symbolizes to us*, not only the faith of the unlearned, but of the doctors of the Church also, *who have to investigate, and weigh, and define*, as well as to profess the Gospel; *to draw the line between truth and heresy*; to anticipate or remedy the various aberrations of wrong reason; to combat pride and recklessness with their own arms; and thus to triumph over the sophist and the innovator [emphasis added].⁵⁰⁹

Burne-Jones therefore would have been aware of the theological potentials and problems of the Mother of God as debated from the earliest periods of the church to Newman's discussion of 'St. Mary' to the latest dogmatic proclamation. Further, he had seen the expansive role of Mary in the countless chivalric models of medieval literature – something he knew and studied first-hand in the manuscripts available to him and Morris at

⁵⁰⁸ For Newman, this was a key example of the development of doctrine (Ker, *John Henry Newman*, 315).

⁵⁰⁹ Newman, *Fifteen Sermons*, 15.

the Bodleian in Oxford and afterwards, when the latter collected many for himself.⁵¹⁰ In such examples, it is the case that ‘many medieval love lyrics are difficult to determine as to whether they are addressed to the poet’s mistress or to the Blessed Virgin Mary. In England many of the most beautiful of these lyrics were addressed to Mary... Celibate knights, such as the Templars, would often [even] dedicate their chastity to Our Lady, and so courtly love also had its religious ideal.’⁵¹¹ Thus, Burne-Jones, in theology and in literary culture, would have been aware of the far-reaching typological potentials of the Virgin Mary.

The Architecture of Annunciation

His depictions of the Virgin Mary during the ‘mature’ period of his career are no less mysterious and pose no fewer questions than those of his earlier period; in fact, they attest to a continuing interest in the potential of incarnational theology as it affects his wide range of works that feature the theme of ‘love between worlds’. The scene of the Annunciation is the most widely occurring and potent of Marian themes. As a point in the incarnation when the word of God is ‘made flesh’ as the incarnated Christ through the Virgin Mary, the Annunciation provided a challenge for artists through the centuries.⁵¹² A perfect religious metaphor for their artistic creative enterprise, the Annunciation has an extensive tradition in art, developing conventions that may be compared to a ‘theology of art’ – art developing intensely theological principles. As in the work of Fra Angelico, the artistic power of Annunciation imagery was bound irrevocably with the narrative of the incarnation: the ‘mysterious’ embodiment of divinity and the initiation of Christ’s sacrifice, resurrection, and

⁵¹⁰ John Christian, ‘William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones and Illuminated Manuscripts,’ *Important British Art* (London: Christie, Manson, and Woods, 2002).

⁵¹¹ Mark of Whistable, *Gospel Chivalry: Franciscan Romanticism* (Leominster, Herefordshire: Gracewing, 2006) 2.

⁵¹² Melissa R. Katz and Robert A. Orsi, *Divine Mirrors: The Virgin Mary in the Visual Arts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Georges Didi-Huberman, *Fra Angelico: Dissemblance and Figuration*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990); Sarah Drummond, *Divine Conception: The Art of the Annunciation* (London: Unicorn Publishing Group LLP, 2018).

redemption. For the Church Fathers, the Annunciation was a key moment in the meeting of word and image; a ‘central kernel – the kernel of the mystery,’ that extended ‘beyond their [visible] aspect, as indexes of the mystery.’⁵¹³ As an essentially ‘*visual* operation,’ artworks of Annunciation had to attempt ‘to draw the gaze beyond the eye, the visible beyond itself, into the terrible or admirable regions of the imaginary and the phantasm.’⁵¹⁴ In Burne-Jones’s various works on Mary and the Annunciation, we may begin to question how his depictions may be related to quite an elaborate vision of cosmic creations – again, conceived through architectural mechanisms and structures of embodiment founded upon the actual, conceptual, and liturgical foundations of the church.⁵¹⁵

Burne-Jones’s major painted work on the theme came in 1879 (Figure 22). It was a rare commission of a religious subject for the personal home of Prime Minister William Gladstone. Phyllis Weliver, in her article ‘Liberal Dreaminess and *The Golden Stairs* of Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898)’, has researched the political implications of this painting and the *Golden Stairs*, and its ties to this particular patron.⁵¹⁶ However, it is important here as Burne-Jones’s major large-scale painted Annunciation.

The 1879 picture is an enigmatic work. As previously mentioned, it was neither created for a specifically religious context nor is ‘decoration’, like a stained-glass window or a piece of painted furniture. Its shape and size alone suggest something of religious magnitude. It is large in scale and very vertical, much as a stained-glass window would be. And yet, for its size, splendour, and dramatic subject matter – the descending of the Holy Spirit into the Virgin Mary – it is not a particularly ‘showy’ picture. Gabriel is on one side,

⁵¹³ Didi-Huberman, *Fra Angelico: Dissemblance and Figuration*, 6-7.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵¹⁵ Thus, the theories of Didi-Huberman on Fra Angelico become useful for expansion, especially in relation to the ideas of sacramentality - marriage and the eucharist - drawing and incarnation previously mentioned.

⁵¹⁶ Phyllis Weliver, ‘Liberal Dreaminess and The Golden Stairs of Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898)’ *The British Art Journal* 17, no. 3 (Spring 2017).

hanging mid-air in front of a tree, and Mary is on the other. An archway appears between them, unfurnished. The colours themselves are neutral, and the figures, frozen, static, and perceptively empty of emotional expression. Burne-Jones has spent a great deal of effort on the detail, meticulously painting the tree where the angel miraculously floats, the mouldings surrounding the archways and potted plant, the smallest detail, in the corner above Mary. Yet Mary herself looks neither stunned nor afraid nor excited by the hovering angel – she holds a limp hand to her chest as if only to ask, ‘Who me?’ – and the moment itself hovers in timeless, placeless, and emotional suspension. Despite all the particularity of Burne-Jones’s execution, the viewer does not know where this is happening, when this is happening, and how either Mary or Gabriel feel. This mood contrasts with his earlier Annunciation wings for St. Paul’s, Brighton, where, though still relatively calm and static, Mary sits in the posture of prayer and acceptance (Figure 5). By contrast, the Mary for this painting shows no particular religious feeling and appears in a simple statuesque pose.

This mysterious stasis is remarkably different from his early design for this painting, a sketch now held at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford (Figure 23). Much like *The Merciful Knight* and its designs, this work considers the balance of the openings and closures of protective, figurative architecture with the posed expressions of the figures themselves. From the sketches to the paintings, we see a shift from greater intimacy with the figures’ inner thoughts and the story to more of a frozen moment. In this, Burne-Jones begins to figure the image by the creating distance with an architectural setting that ingests the meaning and shrouds it in mystery. Thus, he clears the way for exegetical expansion and intellectual, contemplative theological movement within the interior workings of the scene.

Where the painting has Mary forward-facing, the elaborated sketch for the painting shows Mary slightly turned away from the angel, who kneels in, rather than floats before, the tree. There is greater drama, then, in the way she points at herself in questioning anxiety as

she receives the news that she is to bear the redeemer of the world. The kneeling angel himself is also considerably less statuesque and static – he brings one arm across his chest and there is something more dramatic in this closed, rather than the painting’s open, gesture. The figures themselves are brought further forward, and the swirling action of the line – the way the drapery is depicted on the figures, Gabriel’s wings – all bring the more emotive elements of the moment that the ‘Word was made Flesh’ to the fore. The architecture is simplified, though more closed: the back wall is darkened to only reveal a peeping hole of light, indicative of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the whole setting is tighter, the action contained. The figures seem to light up almost as a stained glass window would, with that central, blank opening shining in from behind and the story right on the surface, the line negotiating the empty spaces of the pages and the empty space of the viewer, to be filled by the image that the work projected.

The sketch is an immediate relation to two specific earlier drawings by Burne-Jones: the first, a copy he had taken from Simone Martini’s famous *Annunciation* altarpiece while travelling in Italy (Figure 24); the second, a design for the Castle Howard stained glass window that echoes the Martini Madonna in her gesture (Figure 25). In his sketch of the Martini, he isolates the figures of the Virgin and Gabriel, emphasising the latter’s expressive twist away from the angel. On the side, he notates the colour – this is important, considering that the background itself is simply a wide expanse of gold-leaf, which indicates the placeless timeless eternity of the Annunciation moment and its relation to heaven. Like a window, the altarpiece belongs to its own architectural setting and can take this radically abstract form – simply a colour – as a backdrop.

In the Castle Howard cycle narrating the Scriptural episodes from the beginning of Christ’s life – paralleled by the foretelling of Christ’s coming by the Old Testament prophets in complimentary frescoes – the Annunciation is a key moment which is striking when

compared to the sketches for and the final version of the 1879 painting. Here in the design for the stained-glass window, he has placed the Tree, which, in the later versions, Gabriel either kneels in or floats in front of, centrally. However, they are both the same tree, each representing the Tree of Knowledge in Paradise from which Eve picked and she and Adam ate, leading to sin and the fall of man. Burne-Jones directly figures this moment by showing a snake curled ominously around the tree's trunk with Eve's head, aged and agonized, at the bottom. At the top, the dove of the Holy Spirit is in flight, headed towards Mary. Thus, Mary's role could be as the pathway into re-entry into the divine life of Eden. Bearing the Son of God, the New Adam, she will do away with the sin of Eve.⁵¹⁷

Though this tree dominates the upper portion of the background and provides the main structural support between the angel and Mary, most of the space is simplified by Burne-Jones's use of a drape across the back. This combination of the branches of the tree and the drapery echoes what Burne-Jones had done in his first altar for St. Paul's (Figure 5). Thus, like the early sketch for the 1879 painting, the 'architecture' is limited but the figures are brought to the foremost ground of the picture. Their emotive gestures, the fearful turning away of the Virgin from the Angel who reaches a pair of pointed fingers at her, the tree, the scowling face of Eve are all proposed by this design for stained glass. Within a chapel setting, to be lifted up on high in the glowing light of the glass, the design – like the *Good Shepherd* window (Figure 11) – relies upon its material as a window within a specifically sacred space and uses the ideas inherent to those materials to convey the bridging of heaven

⁵¹⁷ For a full discussion of Newman's ideas of the Second Eve, see Kathy Bullough, 'Serpent, Angels and Virgins: The Virgin Mary as the "Second Eve" in the Art of Burne-Jones,' *Religion and the Arts* 4, no. 4 (2000), 463-90.

and earth – materially, thematically, conceptually, but above all else, reliant on the mystery of external light.⁵¹⁸

The final 1879 painting, as a contrast to these examples in design, expresses similar ideas, but with increased intricacy and subtlety that adds a certain degree of literal depth to the picture's proposed theology. Taking in, internalising the architecture and sacred context meant for the other works, creating its own separate and isolated space, the drama comes not in the expression of the figures but in the suspension of figures that puts all their potential meanings at play, spiralling open into the creative exegesis of salvation history. In this version, much like the painting of *The Merciful Knight* (Figure 14) or the *Prioress's Tale Cabinet* (Figure 4), Mary is 'doubled', multiplied innumerable. Burne-Jones purposes an artistic theology where in this space Eve and Mary, Expulsion, Annunciation, and redemption are pivoting together in a circular structure. Mary herself is a pillar. She is standing columnar next to a vessel which appears to be at once her attribute as the 'vessel most clean' and a funerary monument, prefiguring the death of her son. Above her, Burne-Jones decides to show a depiction of the Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden by an angel armed with fire in the relief next to the archway. Thus, as a character, Mary has no need of the expression of the preceding sketches and designs. Indeed the whole picture *is* Mary, the extending empty 'virgin' hallway, the vessel, the image of Eve that makes all this necessary, that sustains and continues the rotation of the mystery, of this love between worlds where impossibility is made possible, where a human woman conceives God Himself. Having contemplated the activity of the line, opening and closing the possibilities of expression in the Marian form, Burne-Jones settles on this potent image that is not simply Mary and the angel Gabriel but suggests the incarnation itself and all its universalizing implications. These

⁵¹⁸ Von Meiss, *Elements of Architecture*, 32;152; Sowers, *Stained Glass: An Architectural Art*, 16; Cheshire, 'Space and Victorian Ecclesiastical Interior,' 27-1 32; See Chapter 3, 'The Good Shepherd' and 'Bound indissolubly to the feet of God'.

differences between the sketch and painting underline the significance of the threshold and its descriptive relationship to the figures it encloses; the figure itself can be united with the place as themselves a threshold. Again, to ‘figure’ an image is to distance – the creation of a figural form inherently rests on the creation of spatial form.⁵¹⁹ Especially in theology of the incarnation, the figure and the place must both reinforce and contradict one another so to unify and validate the inherent contradictions and endless relations of creation and imagination. Since ‘the body of Christ is born...*across the threshold* of a hymen that remains in tact’ – Mary’s virgin purity and the mystery of divinity maintained – the threshold envelops these paradoxes in its systematic, architectural, and figural framework.⁵²⁰ It is neither here nor there; timeless, expansive, and exegetical, the invisible love of God is allowed to circulate and grow from a visible space safely ‘distanced’ from reality. The truth, shrouded beyond the mists of the world, maintains both its validity and its separation from reality by visually distancing itself through this layered figural and spatial threshold. Such exegetical devices thus effectively create an

infinite world of relations, of networks where every particle of the sacred text entered into an always unique and totally new correspondence with another particle, freeing meaning to an ever greater extent and, with meaning, freeing faith and the imaginary.⁵²¹

Arguably, these theological impulses are going on in Burne-Jones’s final painting as he moves from a ‘closer’ intimate sketch to a much more ‘distanced’ painting that rests on the very act of figuration, its very substance and subject being the moment of incarnation. As such, the image works to convey what is ultimately the hesitation, the expectancy, the silence, and the magnitude of the exchange of love between God and Man that is the ‘pattern’ at the core of the Christian mystery.

⁵¹⁹ See Chapter 3, ‘The “Angelic Ideal”: An Architecture of Figuration’.

⁵²⁰ Didi-Huberman, *Fra Angelico: Dissemblance and Figuration*, 131.

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

Implications for ‘Mythic Art’

If this proposed ‘Architecture of Annunciation’ was strictly limited to Annunciation images, its potency as a compositional form would not be as telling for a more holistic argument about Burne-Jones’s frame of mind. However, I do believe it is an important point of reference, both theologically and artistically. I argue that the ‘Architecture of Annunciation’ provides a guidepost to understand many of his other works, infusing many of his projects of this period. By using this framework, we are able to more fully understand how he uniquely expresses themes relating to the ‘love between worlds’ that theologically connect to the mysteries of the incarnation of Christ in and through Mary.

In 1884, John Ruskin identified Burne-Jones’s unique ability: to ‘harmonize’ all Greek and Northern mythologies with the ‘loveliest traditions of the Christian legend’.

It should be ground of just pride to all of us here in Oxford, that out of this University came the painter whose *indefatigable scholarship* and exhaustless fancy have together fitted him for this task [of mythic painting], in a degree far distinguishing him above all contemporary European designers. It is impossible for the general public to estimate the quantity of careful and investigatory reading, and the fine tact of literary discrimination, which are signified by the command now possessed by Mr. Burne-Jones over the entire range both of Northern and Greek mythology, or the tenderness at once, and largeness, of *sympathy which have enabled him to harmonize these with the loveliest traditions of Christian legend* [emphasis added].⁵²²

While Chapter 3 opened with a discussion on Burne-Jones’s early article on John Ruskin and his defence of *Modern Painters III*, these words of John Ruskin in his lecture on ‘Mythic Painting’ in his series on *The Art of England* are particularly poignant. As aforementioned, Ruskin was quick to detect Burne-Jones’s enthusiasm and budding potential from the samples of his written work in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* and was delighted by early attempts at design, like the previously discussed *Good Shepherd* window.

⁵²² Ruskin, *Art of England*, 40.

Ruskin would proceed to offer direction and even funding for some of Burne-Jones's immediate early ventures into art, assisting the young student in his initial travels to see and copy Italian masters *in-situ* so to develop his style and his technical abilities.⁵²³ However, by the time of this lecture in 1880, Burne-Jones had moved away from the immediate influence of Ruskin, tiring of copying the works specifically chosen by the critic and teacher. Over the course of two decades immediately after the student's departure from Oxford, Burne-Jones had become an accomplished and independent draftsman, designer, and painter with various patrons and successes in exhibitions.⁵²⁴ Burne-Jones had even sent sketches of *Cupid and Psyche* (discussed below) to Ruskin to be used as exemplary models for drawing students at the art school the latter had founded.⁵²⁵

Therefore Ruskin's statements are significant because they explicitly and directly emphasise the connection between Burne-Jones's work in art and his deep and rigorous theological study; his knowledge and consequent ability to 'harmonize' any artistic subject – Greek or Northern or vague and abstract – 'with the loveliest traditions of Christian legend.'⁵²⁶ These words have been little considered by scholars looking at Burne-Jones.⁵²⁷ However, I argue this is an important point of recognition by Ruskin that supports the expansiveness and overarching mystery of Burne-Jones's specifically theological way of making art. Considering the the 'Architecture of the Annunciation' as a certain potential aspect of the 'loveliest traditions of the Christian legend,' I will now examine the sketches for Burne-Jones's *Cupid and Psyche* illustration project, which began in the 1860s as designs for

⁵²³ Robert Hewison, Ian Warrell and Stephen Wildman, *Ruskin, Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites* (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 2000).

⁵²⁴ *Memorials* 2:18-19;21.

⁵²⁵ 'Elements of Drawing: John Ruskin's Teaching Collection at Oxford,' Ashmolean Museum accessed October 2018 <http://ruskin.ashmolean.org/collection/8994>.

⁵²⁶ Ruskin, *Art of England*, 40.

⁵²⁷ I discussed an example of this in my Introduction, 'The Current Stance'.

William Morris's incomplete *Earthly Paradise* and had implications for other designs across media and for years after.

Cupid and Psyche was one of the central stories Burne-Jones was to illustrate in *The Earthly Paradise*, the vast project of poetry and illustrations imagined by him and Morris but never finished in their desired format – Morris published the poetry, with only a frontispiece by Burne-Jones, in 1868.⁵²⁸ However, many of the drawings for the project were obtained by Ruskin for the Teaching Collection of his drawing school as exemplary forms of design. For Burne-Jones these would inspire various decorative and painted schemes around the theme throughout his career. In this portion, I will examine the 'activity' present in a selection of the *Cupid and Psyche* drawings and their subsequent paintings that can be phenomenologically and thematically related to the theology of the incarnation.

The Artistic Act

It is worth again reconsidering the artistic act itself, and how figuration, the ever-shifting ground between the absence and presence of the physical mark of an elusive ideal, could relate to the scheme of incarnation. The shifting and inevitable reliance of visible upon invisible in drawing, of divine upon earthly, in the 'parabolic' life of Jesus Christ, are not opposite but necessarily united; dialogically supported.⁵²⁹ The activity of drawing for the artist-creator plays this game between perceived opposites – real and ideal, invisible and visible – that takes literal shape in the empty and filled grounds of the picture. This is a desire for revelation, which, 'constitutes the identity of the revealable and the revealed', carrying 'along with it the identity of the image and the original'⁵³⁰ which are not separate but one, like God and his Son, Christ, who had been given to the world because He had so loved it. It

⁵²⁸ William Morris, *The Earthly Paradise: A Poem* (London: F.S. Ellis, 1868).

⁵²⁹ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Noli me tangere: On the Raising of the Body* trans. Sarah Clift, Pascale Anne Brault, and Michael Naas (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 3-5.

⁵³⁰ Nancy, *Noli me tangere*, 4.

is through the desire to express love that the incarnation, Christ's life, his Crucifixion and Resurrection, takes form. Similarly, it is through the desire to express love for God that the faithful can seek and express the invisible realities in the visible world, so following God's will. This could be connected to theology that Burne-Jones studies in his curriculum and from Newman, who drew from Aquinas and various others in that philosophically theological tradition repeatedly, especially when he talks of 'using this world well', and of the 'penetrating' activity of Christian love.⁵³¹ It is also through this same process that art comes to be, manifesting the desire for the ideal in the real. These notions are not only intriguingly developed by phenomenological theorists of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, but also are at work in the thoughts of major artistic thinkers in the nineteenth century, such as Ruskin and Rossetti. In Ruskin's *Elements of Drawing* (1857), he speaks extensively on the activity of the line, even in his basic beginner's instruction to drawing. One must be aware of and draw, he says, 'awful' and 'fateful' lines' that 'have had power over past fate and will have power over its futurity.'⁵³² He continues, 'Now, although the lines indicative of action are not always quite so manifest in other things as in trees, a little attention will so enable you to see that there are such lines in everything.'⁵³³ Rossetti explicitly considers these ideas in his 'double works of art', especially in his poem entitled, 'Hand and Soul' (1850). The poem 'proposes a solution to the conundrum of the visual's access to truth' and yet remains 'an assertion or aspiration rather than a demonstration' reaffirming 'the need the Pre-Raphaelites perceived for a spiritual understanding of experience and the modern age' but still leaving

⁵³¹ 'We attain to heaven by using this world well, though it is to pass away; we perfect our nature, not by undoing it, but by adding to it what is more than nature, and directing it towards aims higher than its own.' Newman, *The Idea of a University* (1852) (London: Aeterna Press, 2015), 90; 'Indeed, many of the precepts of the Apostles, if taken by themselves, might even stand for the mere rules of good behavior in the intercourse of life rather than the strict religious directions, so active and penetrating is Christian love.' Newman, 'Course on the Liturgy, Sermon 16, no. 233 "St John,"' (1830, 1838, 1841), *John Henry Newman: Sermons 1824-1843 Volume I: Sermons on the Liturgy and Sacraments and on Christ the Mediator*, 110.

⁵³² John Ruskin, *The Elements of Drawing* (1857) (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1971), 70.

⁵³³ Ruskin, *Elements of Drawing*, 73.

‘unresolved the problem of how such an understanding is to be achieved or disseminated’.⁵³⁴

Rossetti was contemplating how the actual work – the hand – may relate and convey the work of the soul, and that of divinity. Burne-Jones continued with this same ‘need the Pre-Raphaelites perceived for spiritual understanding’ in his own art, with his own distinct ‘theological’ vision of the relation between the artist’s hand, the artist’s soul, and God. Consequently, seeing the sketches as projections of this intimate relation between ‘Hand and Soul’ are important for uncovering Burne-Jones’s ‘theology of art’.

There could be significant metaphysical parallels between drawing and incarnation. Burne-Jones, sympathizing, as he did, with the ‘loveliest traditions of the Christian legend’, could have in his mind these vast and complex systems of mystery, of creation, and of beauty and truth as the expression of divine love. If we again consider Burne-Jones’s discussion on Newman ‘decades after’ his time at Oxford, these ideas come forward:

When I was fifteen or sixteen he [Newman] taught me so much I do mind – things that will never be out of me. In an age of sofas and cushions he taught me to be indifferent to comfort, and in an age of materialism he taught me *to venture all on the unseen*, and this so early that it was well in me when life began, and I was equipped before I went to Oxford with a real good panoply and it has never failed me. So if this world cannot tempt me with money or luxury – and it can’t – or anything it has in its trumpery treasure-house, it is most of all because he said it in *a way that touched me, not scolding nor forbidding, nor much leading – walking with me a step in front*. So he stands to me as a great image or symbol of a man who never stooped, and who put all this world’s life in *one splendid venture*, which he knew as well as you or I might fail, but with a glorious scorn of every thing that was not his dream.⁵³⁵

What he is speaking of here could be related to is Newman’s own motto: *Cor ad cor loquitur* – Heart speaks to Heart.⁵³⁶ It is through the love of God in Christ that world is created, truth

⁵³⁴ David Peters Corbett in *World in Paint: Modern Art and Visuality in England 1848-1914*, 49;50-51.

⁵³⁵ *Memorials*, 1:59.

⁵³⁶ Brigitte Maria Hoegemann, “‘Cor ad cor loquitur’ John Henry Cardinal Newman’s Coat of Arms,” *The International Centre of Newman Friends*, 1 accessed February 2019,

is revealed, and consequently, men are saved. Love is central to the regulation and animation of faith; its ‘illuminating principle’ and ‘*fides formata caritate*.’⁵³⁷ This can be connected to the ‘love between worlds’ embodied in the ‘secret of the marriage of the Lamb’ discussed in Chapter 2.⁵³⁸ The act of drawing, much like the act of faith, might be considered a tool for Burne-Jones to ‘illuminate,’ ‘animate,’ and ‘regulate’ such principles of his own in art. Drawing, as an endless experimental process in the infinitely impossible possibilities of truth, is a psychological and phenomenological action parallel to what Newman identifies as ‘the living spiritual law in the heart...[which acts] not as a[n] *end*, but as a *means toward* an end...as a private fruit of Christian humility, and love of selfcontrol.’⁵³⁹ It is through the love between humanity, Newman says – heart speaks to heart – that faith can be lived. Thus, this is what Burne-Jones refers to when he says Newman is ‘not scolding nor forbidding, nor much leading – walking with me a step in front [...on the] one splendid venture’.⁵⁴⁰ Art is that ‘one splendid venture’ for Burne-Jones, gloriously scorning ‘every thing that was not his dream’ and yet faithfully and lovingly pursuing it.⁵⁴¹ This is a central point of his theme – the journey of ‘love between worlds’ heavenly and earthly – and also of his actual practice – the journey of ideal into real artwork that each fundamentally sympathizes and harmonizes with metaphysical possibilities of the ‘Christian legend’.⁵⁴²

Love and the Soul

Like many of his works, *Cupid and Psyche* represents a journey: thematically, in the story, and ultimately, in its material production, development, incompleteness, and ultimate

<http://www.newmanfriendsinternational.org/en/cor-ad-cor-loquitur-john-henry-cardinal-newmans-coat-of-arms/>.

⁵³⁷ Newman, ‘Love the Safeguard of Faith,’ 234-38.

⁵³⁸ See Chapter 2, ‘The Secret of the Marriage of the Lamb’.

⁵³⁹ Newman, ‘Course on the Liturgy,’ 109.

⁵⁴⁰ *Memorials*, 1:59.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴² Ruskin, *The Art of England*, 40.

revival. This is among the reasons the series is such an apt example here, as we translate these theological notions from explicitly religious art, such as Annunciation pieces, to those ‘mythic’ works that are potentially ‘harmonized’ with it.⁵⁴³ The characters, Cupid and Psyche, are literally translated as Desire (Latin) and The Soul (Greek); originally written by Apuleius in the second century *Metamorphoses*, it is the allegorical tale of the travail of the soul as it passes from the earthly to the heavenly and its union with desire.⁵⁴⁴ Therefore, it is a pertinent story as we consider the theme of ‘love between worlds’, the activity of love in the ‘technique of desire’ inherent to art-making, and connections to the theology of the incarnation. Further, as a vastly planned scheme pursued by Burne-Jones, it marks a seminal shift in his approach.⁵⁴⁵ Falling after his early time in Rossetti’s studio and initial trips to Italy, his work on *Cupid and Psyche* over the extended period from 1864 onwards considers ideas, material and rhetorical, that will be important for him moving forward.

We must first consider the project’s context as designs for a book. It was not only explicitly modelled on the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (of which he owned a ‘fine copy’)⁵⁴⁶ but as a book itself, it becomes a useful transitional source to think about how he might express theological notions – which are inherently textual and religious – in images that, complexly and perhaps more discreetly, consider the mystery of love, creation, and being that incarnate and embody. This is especially important considering Burne-Jones’s early thoughts on illustration and the ability of such work to be ‘an independent picture; truly a song without words’.⁵⁴⁷

⁵⁴³ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁴ Among the earliest translations of the ‘Cupid and Psyche’ story was by William Adlington in 1566. A later, more contemporary version, more likely known and read by Burne-Jones and Morris was first released in 1795, with a later edition coming out in 1822, by Thomas Taylor.

⁵⁴⁵ Harrison and Waters, *Burne-Jones*, 80.

⁵⁴⁶ William Allingham diary, 1866, cited by Harrison and Waters, *Burne-Jones*, 82.

⁵⁴⁷ Burne-Jones, ‘Essay on The Newcomes,’ 60-1. See Chapter 2, “‘O lovers, how true it is!’: Love Between Worlds’.

The ‘Cupid and Psyche’ designs for the *Earthly Paradise* are thematically and materially serial: one after another, they *figure* the story’s unfolding; the sketches living in the bound architecture of a book that must be flipped and moved through as one would move through series of images around a church. One image is a window onto the next, physically and conceptually reliant on the image before and after it, and Burne-Jones must see his designs not in isolation, but perpetually ‘in the process of...’, always ‘becoming’ and growing in a dialogue with a broader, ever expanding theme. ‘Figuration’, to ‘figure’, rightly understood in the artistic-theological frame of mind I have proposed in Chapter 3, is, again, to ‘distance’ and ‘dis-figure’ – figuring through displacing and therefore setting into a structure that becomes ‘excessively material’.⁵⁴⁸ One must thread their way through the open gaps in this excessive materiality to have a sense of the possibility of the impossible, the visible presence of what is considered an invisible absence. Design, especially book design, relies upon these openings and closures. Particularly in a theme like Cupid and Psyche, the layering of image upon image, the spaces within the image and between images as they tell that story of the soul’s journey to love, are just as important for Burne-Jones as using the stained glass window, the ‘Translucent Christ’ as a ‘Light of the World’, to their fullest extent.⁵⁴⁹ Indeed, Burne-Jones later would call his work in book illustration (such as his and Morris’s *Kelmscott Chaucer*) a ‘pocket cathedral’.⁵⁵⁰ And since, like stained glass, Burne-Jones was not directly involved in the making of the engraved illustration but only in the design itself, those designs, which anticipate their spaces, were created in and through a distance from the final form of the book. Therefore, the project deals extensively with the presence of an absence, generating and yet relying upon an architecture that is the threshold

⁵⁴⁸ See Chapter 3, ‘The “Angelic Ideal”: An Architecture of Figuration’; Didi-Huberman, *Fra Angelico: Dissemblance and Figuration*, 3-4.

⁵⁴⁹ See Chapter 3, ‘The Highest of All Examples’ and ‘The Good Shepherd’.

⁵⁵⁰ Burne-Jones, quoted Velma Bourgeois Richmond, ‘Edward Burne-Jones’s Chaucer Portraits in the Kelmscott Chaucer,’ *The Chaucer Review* 40, no. 1 (2005), 6. This is a rather explicit example of art becoming a practice of religion, since Burne-Jones and Morris would meet every Sunday to work on this project.

between word and image. These visible actions and creations are perpetually in dialogue and tension with invisible ideals.

The *Cupid and Psyche* drawings donated by Burne-Jones to Ruskin's Teaching Collection that I am examining here are cleanly and finely created works nearest to completion as any of his design for the series. Clearly drawn, they are the final stage before the process of engraving. In this chapter, they are the main source against which all other designs for this theme will be compared.

In the first image, Venus is shown 'on the shore' (Figure 26). She is surrounded by cascades of her own wind-blown hair, of swirling roses and doves, with waves at her feet. She is the paramour of Pagan legend. Posed as a classical nude sculpture she stands before a circular columnar temple.

The next image is a direct corollary of 'Venus on the shore': 'Psyche entering the bath' (Figure 27). Rather than by open sea, she is enclosed in a finely delineated architectural setting, with steps down into the pool and steps out in the hallway leading into unknown, suggested distance. Her hair, like Venus's, swirls around her, and she is also classically nude. However, there is something demurer about her. Venus looks directly at the viewer, breaking her bounds, while Psyche instead looks modestly downwards. There is something much more protected, precious, and even virginal about the enclosed Psyche.

Judgement comes upon Psyche in the following images, where the 'Oracle' delivers his judgement to Psyche's father the 'Old King' (Figure 28). In this image, she is proclaimed a sacrifice to placate Venus, who is angered by the worship being shown to the beautiful Psyche. Here Burne-Jones immediately jumps in the narrative to two sketches leading up to the sacrifice itself: 'the nuptial procession', showing musicians and torch-bearers in the right section and 'Psyche led to her nuptials' in the left section, Psyche shown centrally, with

branches in her hand, flowers in her hair, and her hand on her breast (Figures 29-30).

Nuptials and sacrifice are explicitly convoluted in this myth, and Burne-Jones emphasises the unity of these two rites as the scene he depicts is much more a wedding than a ritual of sacrifice. It is refined, beautiful, and even suggests celebration. This will become important moving forward, as it connects with his ideas about the ‘secret of the marriage of the Lamb’ and the key to creating an art that extends beyond what is directly perceived.

The action begins in the next two images, where the alternating parallels of the first two images continue. Venus is shown ‘dispatching Cupid’, her son, to punish Psyche (Figure 31). Venus stands on a throne-like structure and Cupid sets off from the edge of her precipice. He is angelic, bearing his arrows and angel wings like a martyred saint-figure. Venus is on the left and Cupid is on the right. This is directly mirrored in the image of ‘Cupid finding Psyche asleep by the fountain’ (Figure 32). Her face turned from Cupid and the viewer, Psyche languishes unbeknownst to the attentive gaze of Cupid, who has fallen in love with her himself. Rather than the open spaces depicted surrounding Venus, Psyche again shelters in the intimate space of a garden. A dense flowering trellis encloses her on one side, and she is separated from the viewer not only by the stream of water from the fountain, but by a steep drop into the fountain itself. She is wedged between the wall of the garden and the pooling water. In the first meeting of divine and earthly figures, of the first instance of love, this sense of enclosure is an important way to heighten the sense of the mysterious and momentous in this scene.

A beautiful image of ‘Zephyrus taking up Psyche’ follows, in which the angelic Zephyrus shoulders a blissfully sleeping Psyche up over the city just glimpsed in the lower opposite corner (Figure 33). Burne-Jones then depicts the almost playful experience of Psyche arriving at and exploring the heavenly home provided for her (Figures 34-42). A large first image shows her entering a sumptuous ‘court’, full of peacocks, fountains, and beautiful

objects, with staircases, doorways, and windows decorated in great detail. In the next images, wonderful alternating vignettes, showing her walking in, looking in, looking out, seeing, touching, and exploring her new home, Burne-Jones prompts the reader to wander with her as the text is read. The text itself becomes the space between the images, and thus, becomes the architecture. The act of reading is expanded into the act of looking – the act that Psyche herself undergoes as she wanders the mythical architecture of her new home. This is a distinctly new space that Burne-Jones is creating – a space of transition where reading and seeing, imagining in the mind, and actually perceiving with the eyes becomes reality. It is the transition place of the myth; it is the transit point of Psyche, the soul, as she comes closer to Cupid, her divine and currently unknown, unseen lover, and of the reader, who similarly is leaving the earthly world around them to enter more fully into the tale and follow Psyche's journey to union with divine love. What appears to be quite innocent images of pretty Psyche opening cabinets, picking fruit, and examining the food at her table is in fact a processional making-tangible of a new world in which Psyche, and the reader, will experience the sacredness of divine encounter, and eventually, the suffering which the soul undergoes in the continued pursuit of that divine encounter as it desires an ultimate unity in and with it.⁵⁵¹ The fact that this culminates with a fantastic banquet, accompanied by 'Celestial music (The Song While She Eats)', adds an additional connection to the stages of ritual: the sacrificial nuptial procession leading unto a moment of dining at table like an altar, where chalices and various other vessels of sacred appears are situated between Psyche and the viewer (Figures 37-39). Indeed, this decadent unfolding of images, of a feast, can be compared to the theological description of the 'feasts' of the Old Testament that are the typological forerunners to Christ and the eucharist. Newman thought extensively on the festal prefigurations in Proverbs, Isaiah, and Canticles and concluded that

⁵⁵¹ Such as in Newman, 'Love the Safeguard of Faith,' 234-8 and 'Course on the Liturgy,' 109.

...In connexion with such passages as these should be observed St. Paul's words, which seem from the antithesis to be an allusion to the same most sacred Ordinance: "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit," with that new wine which God the Holy Spirit ministers in the Supper of the Great King. God grant that we may be able ever to come to this Blessed Sacrament with feelings suitable to the passages which I have read concerning it! May we not regard it in a cold, heartless way, and keep at a distance from fear, when we should rejoice! May the spirit of the unprofitable servant never be ours, who looked at his lord as a hard master instead of a gracious benefactor! May we not be in the number of those who go on year after year, and never approach Him at all! May we not be of those who went, one to his farm, another to his merchandise, when they were called to the wedding! Nor let us be of those, who come in a formal, mechanical way, as a mere matter of obligation, without reverence, without awe, without wonder, without love...let us come in faith and hope, and let us say to ourselves, May this be the beginning to us of everlasting bliss! May these be the first-fruits of that banquet which is to last for ever and ever; ever new, ever transporting, inexhaustible, in the city of our God!⁵⁵²

This description by Newman, with all its reference to the sumptuousness of gift-giving and banqueting, prefiguring typology and fulfilment, helps us to relate this extensive series of Burne-Jones's images to an act of feasting and the symbolical relation of the unseen to the seen that could be considered theological. It seems quite profane, considering the series of images is punctuated by yet another sumptuous image of a nude Psyche, at her bed with arms raised and eyes demurely away from the viewer as she, again, stands within the safety of an enclosed space (Figure 43). However, it is through these perceptively profane images – images of bread and wine, maidens, brides, and bridegrooms – that this scriptural language works, particularly in Newman and Burne-Jones after him.

Psyche is then met with temptation, as in two images Burne-Jones shows her sisters, first visiting her in her new 'Golden Palace', and then trying in their second visit to get her to break her confidence with her unseen lover, to go against her promise to allow him to visit

⁵⁵² John Henry Newman, 'Sermon 12. The Gospel Feast,' *Parochial and Plain Sermons* vol. 7, 176-178.

only in the dark and thus ‘betray Cupid’ (Figures 44-45). Her happiness at seeing her sisters in the first image – she is shown guiding them in as they look around covetously – is contrasted by her sickly expression in the second image, as she considers the potentially sinful activity.

Prompted by these sisters, Burne-Jones then shows Psyche with her oil lamp, leaning over a very serenely sleeping, half nude image of Cupid (Figure 46). This is an exact reversal of the early image of Cupid initially finding and falling in love with Psyche. Raised up and enclosed, Psyche observes the unknowing Cupid rather than the other way around. This succumbing to temptation, of taking unpermitted sacred knowledge, is ultimately her ‘fall’ that is the opposite of Cupid’s first meeting of her, that first expression of love in the divine meeting human. The immediate consequence can be seen in the following image, in which Cupid is shown literally fleeing from the scene – his feet dangle through the open doorway as he takes flight; anguished Psyche, arms up and on her knees, chases him in vain (Figure 47). The covers are strewn across the bed and onto the ground with fallen roses. It is the end of the palatial bliss – as in the first paradise in the creation narrative of Genesis⁵⁵³ – and the beginning of a long series of trials against Pagan gods. As the start of a succession of images of trial, it is an image full of openings and closures, of an ending and beginning marked by the dense architectural details, of the closing of windows, and the parallel openings of the thrust open bedsheets on one side and door on the other. What follows are repeated images of a different kind of human encounter with the sacred – repentance (Figures 48-58). Many of these images isolate this encounter, showing a pairing of Psyche with an Olympian god in spaces where movement is suggested through the ingestion of the openings and closures of architecture. All these culminate in Psyche’s descent into hell to complete her final task to retrieve a casket; her enchanted slumber then follows upon her disobedience when she opens

⁵⁵³ Genesis 2 KJV.

the casket she had been forbidden to open; Cupid's finding and reawakening of her; and their eventual marriage in Olympian heaven (Figures 59-64).

Of this succession of images, three similarly composed images of divine encounter are the pillars which harmonize and unify the narrative artistically, and, as I argue, theologically (Figures 32, 46 and 64). Not coincidentally, it is these three images that are most often recreated by Burne-Jones in major commissions that isolate one of these three scenes from the rest of the narrative. The images of 'Cupid Finding Psyche', 'Psyche and the Oil Lamp,' and 'Cupid Awakening Psyche' are pivotal moments in the narrative and reflect, and inherently reverse, one another in interesting ways. In this particular series of sketches for the illustration in the Ruskin collection, we see three spaces that uniquely could be using the aforementioned mechanisms of the 'Architecture of the Annunciation'. In the first two of the series, the encounters of the angelic Cupid and the pure Psyche are enshrined and enclosed by the developed detail of compositional layers. When Cupid discovers the unknowing sleeping Psyche, they are raised up on the ledge above a pool and sheltered by a trellis of roses (Figure 32). Even a spout of water crosses the scene; the pillar from which it bursts and the water itself provides an architectural barrier of separation for the viewer and the mystery and 'sacredness' of what is the incarnated experience of love at first sight. Sleeping Psyche bears her breast, bears her heart and soul (as 'The Soul' herself in name and personification), for this first manifested outpouring of love, this creative spark that stimulates the remainder of the journey and will not rest until fullness and sight and union. Burne-Jones will elaborate on this scene in a painting from 1870, now held at the Yale Center for British Art (Figure 65). In this image, there is no spouting water, and Psyche is not splayed so dramatically for the viewer. While she sleeps, she is propped and seated more erectly, with more of her face and both her breasts visible. Without the arc of water and with Psyche seated more upright, there is a greater sense of an arc connecting the couple as Cupid

leans over her. The ‘architecture’ here is less tight and closed as well, with the trellis lower so the city could be seen in the middle distance beyond.

Compare the illustration design and the singular painting with the 1872 stained glass Annunciation window design (Figure 25) and 1879 Annunciation painting (Figure 22).⁵⁵⁴ The illustration design, like the stained-glass window, is part of a greater narrative of images, and further, part of the greater ‘architecture’ of the book – in its physicality and in its relation to the text and other images. Like the stained-glass window, it is tighter in its enclosure and heightened in its mood; the trellis appears and acts much as the drapery in the stained-glass design and the figures have a greater sense of drama and movement. They belong to this moment of incarnated mystery that is lifted up on high and surrounded by the constrains and separations of church or textual architecture.

By contrast, the 1870 painting of *Cupid’s finding of Psyche* has more stasis, and hints toward the mood of the later 1879 composition of the *Annunciation* painting. Like the 1879 *Annunciation*, the 1870 *Cupid Finding Psyche* has more openings, and layers on the story with the reference to the city beyond. Similarly, as aforementioned, the figures are more composed and yet more tightly connected. It is that connection that provides the structure at once architecturally stable and yet swirls out to the openings beyond – beyond in the painting and beyond the painting, to the realm of the viewer. There is a potent connection here, where Psyche unknowingly submits to the ‘announcement’, the annunciated presence of Cupid’s love, much as Mary submits to Gabriel’s announcement of the unseen Holy Spirit.⁵⁵⁵

It is powerful when the scene is reversed in the design of Psyche spying on Cupid while he is asleep (Figure 46). Sight and the forbidden, the relationship between the visible, the knowable and the divine here is held in suspension as Psyche gazes upon her lover for the

⁵⁵⁴ See Chapter 4, ‘The Architecture of Annunciation’.

⁵⁵⁵ Luke 1: 34-5 KJV.

first time herself. Indeed, she falls in love with him as he had with her upon his first finding her. Therefore, it is this gaze that leads on to Cupid's departure from her due to her disobedience and ultimately to her pursuit of his divine love and a sacred life in heaven which culminates in the final re-reversal of their encounter as lovers when Cupid awakens Psyche after her return from hell and her opening of the enchanted box.

This third pivotal scene of Psyche's reawakening is distinct from the great succession of images that came before (Figure 64). Although it exhibits none of the architectural enclosure of the two previous images examined, the tightness of their embrace is the enclosure and structure of sacred union of love and the soul. Its power comes in the heightened suspense of the prior two images, of its dramatic bringing together of the narrative themes and the compositional mechanisms working closer and closer from the manifestation to realization of the mystery of love between divine and earthly worlds. Here, as Psyche awakens, her arms and eyes open to the embrace of Cupid, who bends to hold her, the contrast between this and the previous images are heightened – heightened because the intimacy between sacred and humane exists in the mysteries of the open spaces that the structure of their physical interaction creates. In the emptiness of the image compositionally – the empty space between their bodies as they hurl towards one another, their open, soundless mouths, the open casket at her back, the empty scenery marked only by the line diagonally parallel to their bodies - it has its energy, dynamism, and power.

These points are further emphasised when we see Burne-Jones's designs for a different project of this same theme. Having embraced the anticipated architecture of a book, these Ruskin Collection designs also open themselves to physical spaces beyond the page as Burne-Jones revives their form in the 1870s for the 1 Kensington Green commission. This is an exegetical expansion in the medium of room decoration where actual architecture provides a structure to set the figure at a distance. These would be a difficult project for Burne-Jones,

one that he would design and then not necessarily finish, only to start again when another artist picked up the project and did not follow it to his liking.⁵⁵⁶ His original designs were shaped to the walls and the space, and in them, one could literally follow Psyche on her journey through her trials, errors, and on to her ending in the embrace of her lover.

The series of eleven watercolours for this project adds further to the discussion of the ‘draftsmanship’ of the design, working through and in various media (Figure 66). In these watercolours, Burne-Jones creates miniaturized versions of the walls in which he will transfer the subjects – number ‘V’, showing ‘Psyche with the lamp, gazes on sleeping Cupid’ on one side and ‘Cupid, awakened, flies from Psyche’ on the other, is tympanum-shaped, with the archway separating the two episodes. Further, the story is much more compressed than the illustrated designs where each stage of the story stands in its own right; here, different moments appear in one composition: ‘Zephyrus bear Psyche to Cupid’s House’; ‘Psyche at the Shrines of Ceres and Juno’; ‘Psyche listening to the reeds, and, aided by Jove’s eagle, drawing water from the Dragons Fountain’; ‘Psyche Ferried across the Styx’; and, finally, ‘Psyche, unconscious after opening the casket, is rescued by Cupid’. Often the figure of Psyche doubles and can be seen in one frame as when he depicts Psyche pleading to the goddesses Ceres and Juno, appearing much as the doubling of figures in *The Prioress’s Tale Cabinet* (Figure 4).⁵⁵⁷ In the anticipated architecture of this space, this compression and repetition works, conversely, to expand the space of the narrative through the suggestion of the story’s movement. The multiplying of figures suggests the following of the viewer through these spaces on Psyche’s journey of repentance unto ultimately what is sacredness in

⁵⁵⁶ This project extended into the 1880s. In 1872, Burne-Jones notes that he ‘arranged the story of “Cupid and Psyche” for Howard’s dining-room, and drew in figures on canvas and painted some time at them.’ (*Memorials* 2:30).

⁵⁵⁷ See Chapter 2, ‘Wedding Feasts’.

unified love. Using the architectural surrounds, Burne-Jones also ingests an architecture of his own to delineate this journey and continue this mounting effort towards love.

The early central scene of Psyche being led towards sacrifice becomes interesting when it is compared to Burne-Jones's 1895 painting of the *Wedding of Psyche* (Figure 67). The two are distinct parallels that Burne-Jones makes in the illustration but not directly in the designs for Kensington Green murals. In the murals, the end parallels the beginning in the fact that the 'Finding of Sleeping Psyche' finds its ultimate companion and end in the 'Rescuing of Unconscious Psyche' (Figure 66). Without the marriage of Psyche in Olympus at the end of the murals, the image of Psyche being led to sacrifice becomes an ambiguous combination of nuptials of the sacred and earthly. Especially once we consider these images in a room, in which one would, presumably, walk around and see the images encircling oneself, the conclusion – 'The Unconscious Psyche Rescued by Cupid' naturally is followed upon by the 'Finding of Psyche', so similar to the last image in composition and general tone, which immediately leads to the procession leading to Psyche's sacrifice. In this instance, the 'Marriage' scene is unnecessary because it would be an exact repetition of what is already there. Further, it underlines the point about the procession of sacrifice potentially being a procession unto sacred marriage.

Therefore, we see Burne-Jones's emphasis on the journey of the lover through unseeing and sight, nuptial sacrifice and repentance, and its connection to the triumph of sacred love through a reawakening, resurrection, and bodily assumption and unity in heaven. The three core images of the *Finding of Psyche*, *Psyche Gazing Upon Cupid*, and the *Awakening of Psyche*, reproduced by Burne-Jones across the various projects discussed above, underline the importance of these themes. It is a processional vision exemplified by the liturgy Burne-Jones experienced and the theology he studied, connected as it was to the metaphysical model and physical enactment of the participation in God's grace through the

love provided by the incarnation. In dialogue and development with the ‘Architecture of Annunciation’ I have proposed, these works around the theme of Cupid and Psyche show his interest in incarnational compositional and theological mechanisms. Though a legend of classical heritage, Burne-Jones takes up the underlying theme to connect it to what could be for him the profound truths embedded in Christian revelation. This series, its main body of designs donated to Ruskin, therefore could be seen to exemplify what he said about Burne-Jones’s incredible ability to ‘harmonize’ all legend with the ‘loveliest’ traditions of Christianity.⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁸ Ruskin, *Art of England*, 40.

Chapter 5. Remembrance and Resurrection

In this final chapter, I question the role of Burne-Jones's earlier theological formation in the development of the art of his later life. Further, I ask if and how his 'theology of art' changed, considering both the modifications and consistencies in his aesthetic and theological worldview. Is his later period an even stronger, more emphatic return to the theological training of his youth, as he retrospectively looks back on his life and art? Do his reminiscences expand upon what we know about his experience and philosophical perspective? Does it change it? To begin answering these questions, this chapter will first analyse an important archival source – T.M. Rooke's 'studio conversations'.⁵⁵⁹ Reproduced in fragments by Mary Lago, this manuscript is a document as complex as Burne-Jones's own views and personality can be.⁵⁶⁰ Quotations, sayings, opinions, and debates recorded by Burne-Jones's studio assistant, the Rooke conversations have gone through many filters. Initially, Rooke's made his own personal selection, naturally recording what he heard and what he could remember. Then followed the deciphering of Georgiana who initiated the typescript version now at the Victoria and Albert Museum's National Art Library, and the sparse selections made by Georgiana herself for *The Memorials*. This was followed by Lago's more recent edition, and scholars who have quoted those sparse selections thereafter. However, as we shall see in its analysis, when examined as a whole, it is a useful document for gleaning the role of theological ideas in Burne-Jones's mature mind and work, and his attitude of reminiscence in the later decades of his life.

This textual source analysis will be followed by interpretation of religious works from the 1880s, contemporaneous with many of the quotations Rooke remembered and recorded.

⁵⁵⁹ T.M. Rooke, *Memoirs of Thomas Matthews Rooke: typescript: or Notes of conversations among the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, 1890-1899* MS.L.7-1988, National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum.

⁵⁶⁰ Mary Lago, ed. *Burne-Jones Talking: His Conversations 1895-1898 preserved by his Studio Assistant Thomas Rooke* (London: Pallas Athene, 2012). This is the second printing of this work, which first was published by John Murray in 1982.

To decipher and answer questions regarding Burne-Jones's 'theology of art', I will be examining two sets of major religious commissions that Burne-Jones felt significant personal attachment: the American Church in Rome mosaic designs, about which he was very particular and saw as having the potential to be one of his great master projects; and the *Morning of the Resurrection*, an altarpiece that he later reproduced and turned into a painting for exhibition. As both are vast coordinated schemes, all the different elements work together to create unique theological statements. Seeing how he developed the designs, each design singularly and the greater project holistically, will allow us to compare big theological themes, subjects, and questions as Burne-Jones himself was presenting them. In the case of the American Church in Rome, Burne-Jones made clear that one of his most prized designs, of all the mosaic designs and of his designs altogether, was his 'Tree of Life'. This particular image will be important to examine, as the axis of the American Church in Rome scheme and as an apt example to be compared and contrasted against his earlier thoughts on Christ as discussed in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*⁵⁶¹ and his earlier works which featured what I called 'The Translucent Christ.'⁵⁶² Doing so will also open more complex interpretations on the eucharistic undertones in the creation of the *Morning of Resurrection*, as an altarpiece and as a painting.

The Rooke manuscript

'Belong to the Church of England? Put your head in a bag!' could be seen as definitive of Burne-Jones's thoughts on religion.⁵⁶³ In fact, it can be considered Burne-Jones's vigorous denunciation of any and all religious affiliation or influence. However, there is much more to this exclamatory statement – quite humorous and remarkable enough in

⁵⁶¹ See Chapters 3, 'The Highest of All Examples'.

⁵⁶² See Chapter 3, 'The Good Shepherd'.

⁵⁶³ Burne-Jones to Rooke, *Memoirs of Thomas Matthews Rooke: typescript*, 28.

itself – that shows a much more serious relationship to the religious and theological studies of his early days.

Though quoted off-hand, this statement is complexly situated within a unique and complicated document, that is largely unaccounted for when quoted. The ‘Studio Conversations’ were recorded initially by Thomas Rooke (1842-1942), Burne-Jones’s studio assistant from 1869 until his death – nearly thirty years. In the ‘Apology’ of his transcription, Rooke describes the poignancy of Burne-Jones’s statements, which, in the haste of the moment, Rooke attempted to jot down in secrecy behind a canvas.⁵⁶⁴ The notes tried to capture the powerful presence of the mentor, who to Rooke, was ‘a Demi God or kind of Divine Creature who was never satisfied with less than the whole possession of the heart of whatever mortal he might happen to be with, however near to, or far removed from him’, from a grandchild to a statesman.⁵⁶⁵ The ‘Conversations’ must then be recognised for several initial complicating factors: the accuracy with which Rooke took down certain statements; further, that these statements reflect in themselves Rooke’s own personal interest in what Burne-Jones had said, rather than a broader idea of what Burne-Jones’ himself found important; and finally, that Rooke’s own notes are not what is available to us currently. As we shall see, we instead can only trace a typed transcription, descended from holograph copies of Rooke’s notes made by Georgiana which only exist as fragmentary photocopies. While both the physical copy of the original notes and Georgiana’s holographs are untraced, the typescript of the holograph possessed by the Victoria and Albert Museum’s National Art

⁵⁶⁴ Rooke, *Memoirs of Thomas Matthews Rooke*, i.

⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Library provides a useful source to further Burne-Jones studies, particularly in the realm of his theological thoughts.⁵⁶⁶

In fact, only Mary Lago's *Burne-Jones Talking: His Conversations 1895-1898 preserved by his Studio Assistant Thomas Rooke* stands as the singular published work reproducing parts of Rooke's studio conversations. It is no wonder, as it is a complicated document passed through various iterations and filters. Lago, who died in 2001, said in her 1981 preface that she worked with the two main aforementioned transcripts of the Rooke conversations, both indebted to Georgiana Burne-Jones: a holograph transcript consisting of '416 foolscap pages written almost solidly, with nearly every line of dialogue transcribed as a run-on line'; and 'a later transcript copy made, with a number of emendations, deletions and variations, from the holograph copy and used by Lady Burne-Jones in the writing of that biography [the *Memorials*].'⁵⁶⁷

Despite its complicated history, and the fact that Lago reproduced only 'approximately one third of the entire holograph text', scholars have quoted unquestioningly and frequently from Lago's work.⁵⁶⁸ While easy to do, it is problematic to take many of these quotations on their face value and out of the context of the holistic conversations and the complete history of the document itself. This thesis calls for a re-evaluation and a new use of this source in the context of Burne-Jones's theological views. While the first holograph mentioned by Lago has disappeared (only photocopies of certain selections that Lago made

⁵⁶⁶ T.M. Rooke, *Memoirs of Thomas Matthews Rooke : typescript : or Notes of conversations among the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, 1890-1899* MS.L.7-1988, National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum. The Museum's Registry could not locate an acquisition file for the typescript; however, the index card suggests that it was given by Celia Rooke (née Twisleton-Wykeham-Fiennes), the widow of T. M. Rooke's son Noel. The typescript's accession number indicates that it was accessioned by the Museum in 1988. A manuscript note on the volume's fly-leaf states that it was originally presented to T. M. Rooke by Lady Burne-Jones after the publication of her *Memorials* in 1904 (correspondence, Collection Section, National Art Library Word and Image Department, Victoria and Albert Museum 7 December 2018).

⁵⁶⁷ Lago, *Burne-Jones Talking*, ix.

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

remain at the Missouri State University Archive, where Lago was among the faculty), the second typescript is complete and largely unexamined at the Victoria and Albert National Art Library.⁵⁶⁹ Although the holograph photocopy selections are useful, a deeper analysis of the typescript will be illuminating for its potentials and complications, and produce an original understanding of Burne-Jones's discussions with Rooke, particularly regarding his theological perspective.

This transcription must be understood first as a very personal document. The typescript version was a result of Georgiana's initiative, as she was in 1900 preparing and gathering information for her *Memorials*, published in 1905. The years after Burne-Jones's death was a time of frantic data collection for Georgiana, and she not only had these notes transcribed,⁵⁷⁰ but sought out correspondence from among Burne-Jones's friends. Writing to the critic F.G Stephens just after her husband's death in 1898, Georgiana said:

My wish is to be able to raise up and leave in the world some image of his personality apart from his work – though that of course must always remain the background to any record of his life – and to preserve as many of his words as possible... There are so few [friends] left now who can recall those early days when Gabriel was in his glory and Edward and Morris sat at his feet and rejoiced in his light – and they were so beautiful that I would like to add my witness to them, and to have the help of knowing in what way my impressions of them corroborate or are corroborated by the impressions left upon other minds besides my own. His lovely face and wit too, and his eloquence – I want to keep some of it alive.⁵⁷¹

Thus, when the 'Studio Conversations' came into Georgiana's possession, she had this semi-romantic, nostalgic attitude at heart. An overview of them determines that Rooke's notes seem to be fairly honest in their transcription: there are nearly one hundred and fifty pages

⁵⁶⁹ Email correspondence with MU Ellis Library Special Collections librarian, Kelli Hansen, 9 August 2019.

⁵⁷⁰ We cannot be sure whether Georgiana typed them herself or had someone do it for her.

⁵⁷¹ Georgiana Burne-Jones to F.G. Stephens, 12 December 1898 f. 64 MS Don e 62 Weston Archives, University of Oxford.

and it appears, after typing them all up, she has gone back and crossed out some potentially offensive and personally controversial parts, such as Rossetti's various affairs with other men's wives or how Rossetti and Morris did not get along as well as many would have liked.⁵⁷² Those editing marks indicate that her initial typing-up of the notes was not very selective. If that had been the case, she might have taken out the offending material during transcription. Also, this typescript itself was never meant to be published, but instead used as source material to carefully select from in her finalised biography. However, we can never be sure of that and must keep these factors in mind while examining the document and its contents.

What we do know, from the notes on the inner leaf, is that the remaining unpublished contents were to be of private interest only (See Figure 68). On the inner side of the cover, Georgiana has placed a label 'Lady Burne-Jones, North End House Rottingdean'. On the opposite page, she writes out the date -1900 - her address in Rottingdean and a note that if the document was to be lost and then found, it was to be returned to the above address for a reward of '£5'. Below that, T.M. Rooke makes his own note in 1930: 'Handed over to me by Lady Burne-Jones after the issue of her "Memorials" in 1904 for my possible use of those of the remaining unpublished contents, "in the leisure of later years"'. The quotation within Rooke's note indicates Georgiana's desire that the work remain only as a remembrance, a thing to be looked back upon as a token in times of private leisure.

In relation to Georgiana's fully typed transcription, Lago's *Burne-Jones Talking* is a small book missing out much of the context of the quotations as they occurred in conversation and were recorded initially by Rooke. Her work makes a significant step towards the reproduction of this material. However, her selection could be quoted from

⁵⁷² Rooke, *Memoirs of Thomas Matthews Rooke: typescript*, 18-19.

repeatedly in current scholarship without much methodological thought about the origin, development, and complex potentials of the conversations. Full of observations of other painters, mentors of Burne-Jones like Rossetti, thoughts on painterly technique, and extended discussions on the novels of Dickens and the poetry of Morris, the transcribed typescript collection of conversation shows Burne-Jones as a man at work and at play. Indeed, we do not know what Rooke chose to omit and what Georgiana might have omitted herself. Nevertheless, lots of essential material – more information on the working techniques, interactions, and personal concerns of Burne-Jones and various other members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood - emerges from a deeper study of the typescript and seen in its broadest senses. Furthermore, no matter how much Rooke or Georgiana might have ‘edited’ his words in the process of recording and transcription, Burne-Jones’s distinct voice comes through, aligning with various other sources from his life.⁵⁷³ In the case of this specific study, the integrated nature and complexity of religion and theology for Burne-Jones comes out in higher relief here than in either the oft-quoted selections by Georgiana and Lago of the same text. It therefore becomes important to unpack a series of significant statements, some known through use by Georgiana or Lago and subsequent scholars’ re-quoting of them, and others left out and unexamined.

Burne-Jones’s humorous exclamation about the Church of England is one among several instances where painter and assistant begin serious discussions on the past, and particularly the former’s relationship to and thoughts on religion. The exchange, ‘long ago,’ remembers Rooke, begins with the remark, and continues, ‘How I use to tease my father by telling him he was as Dissenter. He wanted me to be a Bishop – he was always disappointed because I wasn’t a Bishop – he was ambitious about me. If I’d been an Archbishop of

⁵⁷³ Letters to Helen May Gaskell, 1893-8 (Ashmolean; British Library); to Mary Gladstone (British Library); to Julia (Cartwright) Any, 1890-7, MS 3264 (ff. 13-43), Beloe Papers (Lambeth Palace Library).

Canterbury wouldn't I have made 'em jump! The Archbishop of Canterbury ought to go about in corduroys.⁵⁷⁴

There is obviously a gap in this conversation as they continue talking, since the next part of the conversation Rooke says, 'to justify a remark,' Burne-Jones explains that 'If you'd seen at college the sort of material that was being made into parsons there, you would have small respect for the cloth, I can tell you.'⁵⁷⁵ Parenthetically, Rooke adds, '(Then followed stories of scrapes [sic] they got into and out of.)'⁵⁷⁶ This portion of the conversation is also not included in Lago's edition.

While there is humour in this – 'wouldn't I have made 'em jump! The Archbishop...in corduroys' – Burne-Jones's 'justification' shows his seriousness and the disappointment with the profession he had once considered as his only future. There is evident exasperation that reveals not his disrespect for the vocation but his sadness and his higher view of the clergy's call and role in society.

These two tones about religion – humorous and solemn, playful and serious – continue through their conversations over the years. Whether in theological or artistic matters, Burne-Jones conveys his meaning often through ironical turns of speech or outrageous exclamations.⁵⁷⁷ That, however, does not nullify their significance for him. 'You

⁵⁷⁴ Lago only quotes the portion 'Belong to the Church of England? Put your head in a bag!' which is now quoted by many to show what is assumed to be Burne-Jones's hatred of religion (*Burne-Jones Talking*, 27); Burne-Jones to Rooke, *Memoirs of Thomas Matthews Rooke: typescript*, 28.

⁵⁷⁵ Burne-Jones to Rooke, *Memoirs of Thomas Matthews Rooke: typescript*, 28-9.

⁵⁷⁶ Rooke, *Memoirs of Thomas Matthews Rooke: typescript*, 29.

⁵⁷⁷ This, in fact, is much in the tone of the tradition in which John Henry Newman joined when he began the Oratory at Birmingham. The original founder of the Oratory, St. Philip Neri, was actually known for his irony and called the 'Christian Socrates'. See Fr. Jonathan Robinson, *In No Strange Land: The Embodied Mysticism of Saint Philip Neri* (Kettering, OH: Angelico Press, 2015).

will let people know what I feel about the things I have at heart,' Burne-Jones tells Rooke at one point. 'You have heard me say enough here.'⁵⁷⁸

There are several fairly illuminative conversations not reproduced by Lago's edition (and therefore, left out of any historical scholarship on Burne-Jones) that deepen our understanding of Burne-Jones's distinctly 'theological' frame of mind. '[Sydney] Cockerell' Rooke proceeds. 'told me the French saying, that theology killed religion.'⁵⁷⁹ Burne-Jones immediately dismisses this, 'That's rubbish...religion that could be killed by theology wasn't religion.'⁵⁸⁰ Rather than a humorous jab, the comment has a sharp poignancy that reflects an appreciation of the relationship between theology and religion, and the import of theological thought in his own mind. So, as he says 'Belong to the Church of England? Put your head in a bag!', Burne-Jones vigorously makes use of and continues to reverence the founding fathers of theology and the religious systems and innovations they put into place.

Furthermore, the 'dogmatic' theology of Thomism is confirmed as a formative force in his foundational theological outlook. He has distinct memories of early reading and a continued devotion to the theologian, Thomas Aquinas. For him, Aquinas was 'a very great man, a very great man, and in the ancient Church he is important still...I read through the greater part of him when I was young, I found him exceedingly interesting. I loved dogmatic theology when I was young' – yet another quotation left out of Lago's conversations.⁵⁸¹ This love of 'dogma' recalls his devotion to intricacies of theological history, systems, and metaphysics, even from the youngest age when he was explaining to his cousin all the variances between and histories of different sects of Christianity.⁵⁸² Aquinas is among the

⁵⁷⁸ Burne-Jones to Rooke, *Memoirs of Thomas Matthews Rooke: typescript*, 30.

⁵⁷⁹ Isaac Casaubon (1559-1614), a French scholar of philosophy and classical thought, said this.

⁵⁸⁰ Burne-Jones to Rooke, *Memoirs of Thomas Matthews Rooke: typescript*, 66.

⁵⁸¹ Burne-Jones to Rooke, *Memoirs of Thomas Matthews Rooke: typescript*, 65-6.

⁵⁸² See Chapter 1, 'Burne-Jones, the Oxford Movement, and Nineteenth Century Christianity'.

most difficult theologians to master, and Rooke's immediate question, 'Is he readable still?' shows a certain awe that Burne-Jones knew and exalted the theologian so highly. 'Thomist' theology, Aquinas's explications of dogma, centrally revolved around the idea all things emanate from God's will. Everything created is a composite being, given impetus and essence 'to be' from God, who is 'being' itself – pure existence, *ipsum esse subsistens*.⁵⁸³

These quite metaphysical ideas could lead onto Burne-Jones's love of the 'mystical' side of Christianity:

There are only two sides of Christianity for which I am fitted by the Spirit that designs me – the carol part and the mystical part. I could not do without medieval Christianity. The central idea of it and all it has gathered to itself made the Europe that I exist in. The enthusiasm and devotion, the learning and the art, the humanity and the romance, the self-denial and splendid achievement that the human race can never be deprived of, except by a cataclysm, that would all but destroy man himself – all belong to it.⁵⁸⁴

Mysticism and dogmatism – these are two aspects of Burne-Jones's outlook that flourish in his own 'theology of art' that makes good use of the precedents of Aquinas and his re-interpretation in Tractarian thought.⁵⁸⁵ Thus, Burne-Jones's specific memory of reading Aquinas, and his continued praise of him, may seem at first a trivial thing to pass over, simply a part of his studies. However, such systems of thought were so intricate, to study them and, even more, to 'love' them, would make a deep impression on the way someone as absorptive as Burne-Jones conceived his own enterprises in life and potentially in his art.

So, even when he says 'Belong to the Church of England? Put your head in a bag!', Burne-Jones is still reflecting with some reverence on theological thinkers and systems that

⁵⁸³ Edward Feser, *Beginner's Guide to Aquinas* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2009); T.J. Gorringer, *Earthly Visions: Theology and the Challenges of Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 36.

⁵⁸⁴ Burne-Jones to Rooke, *Memoirs of Thomas Matthews Rooke: typescript*, 61.

⁵⁸⁵ In fact, Newman himself translated certain works collected by Aquinas, including the *Catena Aurea, Commentary on the Four Gospels Collected Out of the Works of the Fathers by Thomas Aquinas: Volume 4 St. John* (London: John Henry Parker, J.G.F and J. Rivington, 1841).

formed him. While some days imitating the clergymen who gave the sermons of his youth ('as he often did,' Rooke adds),⁵⁸⁶ he laments the state of Ireland, saying, 'It's a pity. Strange that for centuries the church was the only earthly thing that stood between the rich and the poor.'⁵⁸⁷ He adores 'mystical' and 'Christmas carol' Christianity, but dislikes the Christmas holidays because their popularisation was so different from the 'old times,' when a 'Great Feast' would be held among small communities of reverent faithful to celebrate the day.⁵⁸⁸ When he and Morris are discussing what they would 'do if we were rich,' Burne-Jones remembers first proposing a 'church' instead of Morris's 'King's Palace', then eagerly proclaims that he'd also 'like to open up more of a Herculaneum and see if more things couldn't be got out' (Morris promptly replies, 'D-n Herculaneum...and all Greek things').⁵⁸⁹ Burne-Jones 'loved it all [the Bible], all except the Acts and St. Paul's epistles, they had a poor protestant sound about them. But the older parts and Genesis about all: I must have known them by heart.'⁵⁹⁰

This love of and differentiation between different parts of scripture is telling. The oft-hand aversion to St. Paul's Gospels is in marked contrast to his veneration of St. Paul and his writings in his early *Oxford and Cambridge* article, in which he compared and heralded Ruskin and his writings to St. Paul.⁵⁹¹ While clearly a half-jest and a poke at the Protestant Evangelical bend of his day, his words nevertheless reveal a deeper interest in and an imaginative passion for the greater scheme of salvation history that he has loved from the earliest encounters with religion – from the holidays of his Jewish neighbour-friends to the revivification and recognition of the ancient tradition handed on by the apostolic succession

⁵⁸⁶ Rooke, *Memoirs of Thomas Matthews Rooke: typescript*, 31.

⁵⁸⁷ Burne-Jones to Rooke, *Memoirs of Thomas Matthews Rooke: typescript*, 36.

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 89.

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 13.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 72.

⁵⁹¹ See Chapter 3, 'In Defence of Mr. Ruskin'.

from Christ to the present that the Oxford Movement sought.⁵⁹² He envisions the Bible for its widest imaginative possibilities, that avers the ‘Protestant sound’ in the face of the greater mystery of the prefiguration and incarnation of the mystery of God in Christ.⁵⁹³ In the following sections, a particular focus on the comparison of his religious projects in art to scriptural passages will prove revealing, evidencing his unique vision of Biblical themes and their potency as visual language.

Thus, these documents and their statements, no matter how problematic, make a continued case for a ‘theology of art’ that is deeply ingrained in his context and process of work. Talking about these principles and significant aspects of his past in the context of his studio while he is literally at work, Burne-Jones’s discussion reveals a deeper integration of the formative theological ideas of his youth – of his remembrance, use, and even defence of them. Further, the analysis of the theological tone of many of these discussions, in a more complete and comprehensive form, shows the usefulness of this unique primary source when analysed anew and for its fullness.

Tree of Life

In his studio, Burne-Jones would lament the public’s misconception of his artistic project, highlighting a specific example in design that is particularly apt for understanding Burne-Jones’s ‘theology of art’:

People don’t know anything about our work and don’t really care; they only want to be up to the last thing out. I declare I’m more ashamed than pleased with the most part of the praise that I ever get. There was that design of the Christ (the man and woman with the fruits of the earth) no one even looked at it when it was shewn in the New Gallery. They only saw that it

⁵⁹² Jay, *Faith and Doubt in Victorian Britain*, 24-5; Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition* vol. 5, 258; Ker, *John Henry Newman*, 268; Newman, *Fifteen Sermons*, 24-5; See also Chapter 1, ‘Burne-Jones, The Oxford Movement, and Nineteenth Century Christianity’.

⁵⁹³ Compare Burne-Jones’s words on the ‘Protestant sound’ to Ian Ker’s discussion of Newman’s ideas on the Catholic versus ‘Protestant imagination’ (Ker, *John Henry Newman*, 351-4; 364-5. See also Chapter 1, ‘John Henry Newman’).

wasn't oil painted; and *yet it said as much as anything I have ever done.* [emphasis added]⁵⁹⁴

This design is a significant and fascinating example of Burne-Jones's work at this time. Commissioned for St. Paul's-Within-the-Walls, the American Church in Rome, it is a vast project for mosaics. The central work shows Christ with 'the man and the woman of the fruits of the earth,' and he would describe it in greater detail in a letter to a 'friend' reproduced by Georgiana in the *Memorials* (Figure 69). 'Everything is done to make it [the mosaics] not a picture' he said.

I doubt if you will care for it – perhaps you will. It's one of those things I do outside painting, far away from it. *It has more to do with architecture, and isn't a picture a bit. It's a mystical thing* – Christ hanging with outspread arms but not crucified: the cross is turned into a big tree all over leaves, and the stems of the tree are gold...*the severe limitations of mosaic are all obeyed and observed. I love to work in that fettered way, and am better in a prison than in the open air always.* There is a man on one side of him and a woman on the other, and a cornsheaf by the man and two babies and a lily by the woman – that is all. I am doing my best, but it isn't a picture and few will understand it. It is bright colour and will be high up and very big when it is carried out – and it can't be sold and will be in Rome and will last for ever, and that is why I like doing them [emphasis added].⁵⁹⁵

According to Georgiana, he 'owned' that the man was Adam, the woman was Eve, who 'prefigured the Annunciation,' with the two 'toddles' standing 'for mankind'.⁵⁹⁶ This sort of symbolism is in line with Burne-Jones's discussion about the nature of Christianity with Rooke that 'there are only two sides of Christianity for which I am fitted by the Spirit that designs me – the carol part and the mystical part. I could not do without medieval Christianity...all belong to it.'⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹⁴ Burne-Jones to Rooke, *Memoirs of Thomas Matthews Rooke: typescript*, 22.

⁵⁹⁵ *Memorials*, 2:159.

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 2:160.

A unique convergence between subject and medium, a way of working and the material that was worked on, emerges from these passages and the series of artworks he was focusing on at the time. As we have seen, Burne-Jones – like many of the Pre-Raphaelites and their riddled ways of speaking – often took characters in his speech and letters, making jokes about himself or using an extreme opposite exaggeration to make his own view known. However, these *are* serious matters for him; matters he had devoted the whole enthusiasm of his youth, and in these later years, subjects that he merged with the entire purpose of his artistic career at the peak of his maturity. If he were to discuss anything in truth, it was the seriousness of his artistic enterprise. When he does, it is in line with this complicated view of art, its medium, and its most-desired context: a sacred, public setting that ‘can’t be sold...and will last for ever’; that represents ‘the enthusiasm and devotion, the learning and the art, the humanity and the romance, the self-denial, and splendid achievement that the human race can never be deprived of.’⁵⁹⁸ The seriousness of this enterprise not only is evidenced by countless letters in which Burne-Jones seeks to manage the translation from sketch to mosaic from afar but is further underlined when a controversy of plagiarism and artistic doctrinal clarity arises.⁵⁹⁹

‘It is clear I am a heretic’

At various points in his mature career, Burne-Jones corresponded with sympathetic art critics such as F.G. Stephens and Julia Cartwright (Ady).⁶⁰⁰ His letters to Cartwright in the Lambeth Palace Library archive address the particular mosaic project, and have never been examined before. Here, they offer a new perspective on Burne-Jones’s artistic venture as he

⁵⁹⁸ *Memorials*, 2:159; Burne-Jones to Rooke, *Memoirs of Thomas Matthews Rooke: typescript*, 61.

⁵⁹⁹ See Richard Dorment’s article, ‘Burne-Jones’s Roman Mosaics,’ *Burlington Magazine* 120, no. 899 (Feb. 1978), 72-82.

⁶⁰⁰ Edward Burne-Jones, Letters to F.G. Stephens. Weston Library, Bodleian, Oxford, UK; Letters to Julia (Cartwright) Ady, 1890-7. MS 3264 (ff. 13-43), Beloe Papers, Lambeth Palace Library.

attempts to defend his work.⁶⁰¹ He had been writing to Cartwright on various other subjects when he believed he had been plagiarized by Sir William Blake Richmond, an artist of romantic style who had been commissioned to do mosaics in St. Paul's Cathedral. In the letter Burne-Jones described how Richmond has 'pirated' his design for a 'Tree of Life' from the *Tree of Life* mosaic of Burne-Jones's conception (Figure 70). Richmond claimed he has taken the idea from a manuscript – in his letter to Cartwright, Burne-Jones scoffs at this suggestion and says he has never heard of such a thing, claiming the originality of his own design. Eventually, the matter is settled for him when Richmond withdraws his design. Burne-Jones sent Cartwright the newspaper clipping outlining the end of the drama: Richmond, says the article, 'abandoned his idea, of which it appears there is insufficient authority, of representing the figure of Christ as crucified upon the Tree of Life, and he will substitute a cross...His design may lose something of its originality by the change, but it will better satisfy those necessities of symbolical expression which are recorded as supremely important in ecclesiastical decoration.'⁶⁰² Burne-Jones immediately goes on to say: 'Such is history. But which is worse, to be a pirate or to be a heretic? To be hanged for the one, or burnt for the other? It is clear I am heretic.'⁶⁰³

In this same set of letters to Cartwright, he would claim that he never was a 'holy man'; however, as seen in the above correspondences, these notions are situated within a complex notion of himself and his project that may seem contradictory on the surface.⁶⁰⁴ The remarks are to a degree a symptom of Burne-Jones's tongue-in-cheek way of putting things – a way of making a point about the most serious aspects of his life and art. Although

⁶⁰¹ Edward Burne-Jones, Letters to Julia (Cartwright) Ady, 1890-7. MS 3264 (ff. 13-43), Beloe Papers, Lambeth Palace Library.

⁶⁰² In 1897, the project would actually be unfinished.

⁶⁰³ Burne-Jones to Julia (Cartwright) Ady, 1890-7. MS 3264 (ff. 13-43), Beloe Papers, Lambeth Palace Library.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid.

he feigns naivety in issues of faith, he maintains a certain pride in being considered a ‘heretic’ against the institutions we have already heard him cry out against. The very notion of ‘heresy’ is a theological one, and thereby marks out his art of rebellion as a particularly theologically minded enterprise comparable to a critique of his national church and the turn to Rome Newman and Wilberforce had taken, that he had one point even considered.⁶⁰⁵ Ultimately, this form of ‘heresy’ is comparable to the claims the establish Judaic church made against the prefigurative prophets and Christ himself in the Old and New Testaments. Through it, he therefore becomes a ‘prophet’ like Ezekiel; looking in from the outside, he laments the misunderstanding of his artistic ‘prophesy’ by the public while at the same time claiming for himself a pride of place as a misunderstood prophet who the establishment would see as ‘heretical.’⁶⁰⁶

If we compare this correspondence with the conversation with Rooke about standardized iconography versus ‘innovation’ that we discussed regarding the Annunciation in Topcliffe in Chapter 2, we begin to see the potency of the connection between potentially controversial religious ideas and unique artistic compositions.⁶⁰⁷ Although Burne-Jones, in the case of the Annunciation, is dissuading Rooke from taking such risks, there is a certain pride that Burne-Jones himself takes in this act of artistic rebellion – a theological challenge.

It is in fact the merging of new elements, iconographically and materially, that inspires Burne-Jones. Often it is the subversion of the actual material that makes the artwork

⁶⁰⁵ See Chapter 1, ‘Charles Marriott.’

⁶⁰⁶ In a letter to Frances May Gaskell, he says as much when he describes a visit to London: ‘time will be truly eaten up – theatres, dinners, suppers, breakfasts, lunches, new marvels, debates in the home, cabinet secrets, a ritualist preacher, a dissenting preacher, a gifted infidel, a Mahatina [Is this Burne-Jones’s spelling of a ‘Hindu’ name, such as Mahatma Gandhi, who was in London studying at UCL from 1888?], the new Cardinal, some visiting members – African explorers, a cowboy, the astronomer... You know I dare say... I should never again speak about it – it isn’t my affair – but it is fascinating even to see, what must it be to live a life it is the most sceptical despairing I have ever seen. I could stand like Ezekiel by the boiling pot – the seething pot... and prophesy...’ (Burne-Jones to Gaskell, Ashmolean Western Art Print Room).

⁶⁰⁷ See Chapter 2, ‘Early Religious Work’.

acquire new, expansive, and potentially supernatural meanings stimulating prayer and revelation.⁶⁰⁸ The art pieces themselves begin to show more clearly these deeper layers of meaning at play, especially when compared to Burne-Jones's mysterious way of describing them, to Rooke and then to Cartwright. The *Tree of Life* as he discusses it above is a key example. His words seem strange at first glance – how can this work of art ‘say as much as anything’ he has ever done and yet he has done all that he could have to make it ‘not a picture,’ being so ‘outside’ and ‘far away’ from painting?⁶⁰⁹ How can it be a ‘mystical thing’ while contained in a ‘prison’, which he ‘loves better’ than ‘open air’?⁶¹⁰ How, in depicting Christ on the Tree of Life, is he a self-described ‘heretic’?⁶¹¹ He is direct about its deep and profound theological implications, and yet he poses himself as a heretic for how he conceptualizes its design. On the one hand, his enjoyment of the medium’s ‘severe limitation’ and its ‘fettered ways’ has at its root a love of systematic order that would have belonged to the tradition of the ancient church Burne-Jones followed the Tractarians in studying and reverencing.⁶¹² The statement about heresy, then, seems to contradict the notion that he not only honours but ‘loves’ and finds inspiration from tradition in his religious work. However, the statements make much more sense when we understand that on the other hand his particular experience of the tradition is much more dynamic and creative than one may judge from such apparently confusing statements. We must again turn to his formative years in theology, and how he remembers and replays these experiences on an even larger scale in his later, freer (and yet ‘fettered’) years.⁶¹³ His art must be considered itself a theology, an organic complex stemming from theology as itself a metaphysical system presented by those

⁶⁰⁸ Didi-Huberman, *Fra Angelico, Dissemblance and Figuration*.

⁶⁰⁹ Burne-Jones to Rooke, *Memoirs of Thomas Matthews Rooke: transcript*, 22; *Memorials*, 2:159.

⁶¹⁰ *Memorials*, 2:159.

⁶¹¹ Burne-Jones to Julia (Cartwright) Ady, 1890-7. MS 3264 (ff. 13-43), Beloe Papers, Lambeth Palace Library.

⁶¹² *Memorials*, 2:159.

⁶¹³ *Ibid.*

like Aquinas, made present in the incarnation and its re-presentation in the sacraments, known, studied, and recalled by Burne-Jones.⁶¹⁴ It connects to what may seem like ‘severe limitations’ and ‘fettered ways’ in the ceremonials of the mass and in the creation of art with the ‘sacred’ aim of seeking and depicting divine otherworldly beauty.⁶¹⁵

Ancient Origins

As a theme, the Tree of Life is an ambiguous and potentially contentious subject that might have confused viewers and be considered something unorthodox, subversive, and even ‘heretical’ in a church setting. The ‘Tree of Immortality’ is mentioned in the Islamic Quran, and there are many references in Hebraic literature, within and outside of the Old Testament, that conflate the ‘Tree of Life’ with ‘the Tree of Knowledge’, with access to (and banishment from) Paradise, and equate the Torah itself with a tree.⁶¹⁶ In Nordic mythology, a constant source of stories for William Morris, who wrote *The Story of Sigmund the Volsung and the Fall of Niblungs* in 1876 based on the *Poetic Edda*, *yggdrasil* was the ‘mythical world tree’ made of ash.⁶¹⁷ Further afield, Hinduism and Buddhism make ample use of the tree as a symbol. A *bodhi* tree is where Buddha had attained enlightenment, thus marking another confluence of tree imagery with knowledge, light, and revelation.⁶¹⁸ Across these cultures, there is a common interest in the ‘tree’ as a symbolic basis for cosmological and ontological understanding; a grounds for the existence of being and exchange with divinity.⁶¹⁹ As a mysterious image with universalizing potentials, it would not only be used by Burne-Jones

⁶¹⁴ Burne-Jones to Rooke, *Memoirs of Thomas Matthews Rooke: typescript*, 65-66.

⁶¹⁵ Newman, *Discourses to Mixed Congregations*, 70; Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition* vol. 5, 265; Pearce, ‘Tradition and Conversion,’ 186; See also Chapter 1 ‘John Henry Newman’.

⁶¹⁶ Eliezer Shore, ‘The Tree at the Heart of the Garden,’ *Parabola: The Tree of Life* 14, no. 3 (New York, August 1989), 39.

⁶¹⁷ *The Poetic Edda*, trans. Lee M. Hollander 2nd ed, rev (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 2;4;10;60; Paul Jordan-Smith, ‘The Serpent and the Eagle’ *Parabola: The Tree of Life* 14, no. 3 (New York, August 1989), 64-71.

⁶¹⁸ Jordan-Smith, ‘The Serpent and the Eagle,’ 69; Rene Guenon, *Symbols of Sacred Science*, trans. Henry D. Fohr (Hillsdale, NY: Sophia Perennis, 2004).

⁶¹⁹ Jordan-Smith, ‘The Serpent and the Eagle,’ 67.

here but also those like Mary Watts, who in her chapel at Compton decorated 1896-8, unites a rich history of Pagan and Christian iconography. A garden of interweaving rich colours and elaborate patterns, angel-like nymph-like figures nestle like petals within Watts' scheme, with simple crosses adorning the uppermost parts of the tree. This marks significant difference with Burne-Jones, with the architectural and social contextual settings being wholly different - Watts' designs executed in an intimate private chapel by local artisans, Burne-Jones's appearing in the vast space above and surrounding the altar of a major new church designed by G.E. Street, in a capital of Christianity itself. Further, Burne-Jones's image explicitly shows a crucified Christ, with a great deal of emphasis on his exposed, naked flesh, where no such similar image appears in the Watts Chapel. With Burne-Jones, therefore, we must take into consideration not only the Tree of Life's cross-cultural potentials, which, from the readings of his youth through his adulthood, interested him but also theological interpretations that would have informed his conceptualization of the design and added a unique twist to his artistic rendering of the theme as itself a crucifixion.

Scripturally, the Tree of Life has a significant role in the Old Testament. The Tree of Knowledge from which disobedient Eve eats, it appears in Genesis from the outset⁶²⁰ and then is carried through as a main symbol in proverbs.⁶²¹ In the New Testament, the Gospel of John equates Christ with a tree,⁶²² and Revelation, the final book of the Bible, makes extensive use of the imagery, especially in the context of redemption and the New Jerusalem.⁶²³ Furthermore, the very material of the cross - which was said to have been found by St. Helena, mother of Constantine - was subject of much extra-Biblical legend. It was considered by the thirteenth-century *Golden Legend* to be made of wood from Eden: in the

⁶²⁰ Genesis 2:9 KJV

⁶²¹ Proverbs 3:18, 11:30, 13:12, 15:4 KJV.

⁶²² John 15 KJV.

⁶²³ Revelation 2:7, 22:2, 14, 19 KJV.

‘Life of Adam’, the author Voragine says the wood came from three trees grown of three seeds from the ‘Tree of Mercy’ which had been planted in Adam’s mouth at his death; in the ‘Of the invention of the Holy Cross, and first of this word invention’, Voragine also associates the wood with a tree planted on Adam’s grave that had grown from the ‘Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil’ from which Adam and Eve had eaten.⁶²⁴ Poetry and the medieval imagination did much to continue adding to these interlocked symbols. A tenth-century poem, entitled ‘The Dream of the Rood’, not only describes the Cross of the Crucifixion as a tree but speaks from the perspective of the wood of the tree from which the cross was made. This tree begins by describing how “‘Long years ago (well yet I remember)/They hewed me down on the edge of the holt/Severed my trunk strong foemen took me;/’ and then proceeds to recount how Christ was ‘mount[ed] upon me’.⁶²⁵ The story ends by exhorting the dreamer to remember how ‘I opened for them/The true Way of life. Lo! the Lord of glory,/The Warden of Heaven, above all wood/Has glorified me as Almighty God’ and as ‘the Tree of Glory’.⁶²⁶ An early English hymn calls Christ ‘the apple tree’.⁶²⁷ Thus, the ‘Tree of Life’, trees of Paradise and of Knowledge, actual trees and the Crucifixion were conflated and seen as intimately related in broader Christian legend.

Furthermore, the subject was an important one for the early Church Fathers, and became a vital point of patristic thought that Burne-Jones would have been aware of from his earlier studies, especially concerning the relation of Christ as the remedy of Adam and Eve’s sin in the crucifixion and the sacraments that flowed from it. For example, St. Ignatius of

⁶²⁴ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: The Lives of the Saints* trans. William Caxton, ed. George V. O’Neill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914).

⁶²⁵ ‘Dream of the Rood,’ from *Anthology of Old English Poetry* trans. Charles W. Kennedy 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960).

⁶²⁶ Ibid.

⁶²⁷ Joshua Smith and Elias Smith, ‘Jesus Christ the Apple Tree’ *A Collection of Divine Hymns, or Spiritual Songs* (New York: Paraclete Potter, 1810), accessed 11 March 2019, <https://archive.org/details/acollectiondivi00smitgoog/page/n10>.

Antioch, cited directly by Wilberforce in his own treatise that Burne-Jones had read decades before, connects Christ in his eucharistic form to the ‘medicine of immortality, the antidote we take in order not to die but to live forever in Jesus Christ’.⁶²⁸ Other major thinkers similarly associated the crucifixion, Tree of Life and the eucharist: St. Bonaventure, in his extended prayerful poem entitled ‘The Tree of Life’, also reinforced the idea that Christ crucified is himself the medicinal fruit of the tree of life,⁶²⁹ and Augustine of Hippo went so far to say:

*All these things stood for something other than what they were, but all the same they were themselves bodily realities. And when the narrator mentioned them he was not employing figurative language, but giving an explicit account of things which had a forward reference that was figurative. So then the tree of life also was Christ... and indeed God did not wish the man to live in Paradise without the mysteries of spiritual things being presented to him in bodily form. So then in the other trees he was provided with nourishment, in this one with a sacrament... He is rightly called whatever came before him in order to signify him.*⁶³⁰

Augustine’s thought that ‘all these things stood for something other than what they were’ has a strange resonance with Burne-Jones describing how the *Tree of Life* is far ‘outside’ of painting and standard representation and is ‘not a picture’ at all.⁶³¹ It is this resonance with the extra-Scriptural, the patristic, and the sacramental elements of theology that could make Burne-Jones’s crucifixion-without-a-cross, Tree of Life with Christ as fruit, a theological treatise in a sense on the meaning of the mass, the sacraments, and the scheme of salvation history.

In fact, John Henry Newman himself repeatedly draws on this image of Christ as the Tree of Life when describing the life of the church – and most aptly, its just and proper

⁶²⁸ St. Ignatius of Antioch, quoted by Wilberforce, *The Holy Eucharist*, 102.

⁶²⁹ St. Bonaventure, *The Soul’s Journey into God, The Tree of Life, The Life of St. Francis*. trans. Ewert Cousins (Mawah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978).

⁶³⁰ Augustine of Hippo, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, VIII, 4, 8 (On Genesis, New City Press, p. 351-353)

⁶³¹ *Memorials*, 2:159.

physicality, its decoration and adornment. ‘Such were the forms of worship in the beginning;’ Newman says after describing the development of the church’s place in history, ‘Till, as time went on, the Church, *like some fair tree*, put out her branches and foliage, and stood complete in all manner of holy symbols and spiritual ordinances, *an outward sign of that unseen Temple in which Christ had dwelt from the first*’ [emphasis added].⁶³² It is no accident that Newman uses the image of the tree to bring together the expanding church and the ‘unseen Temple in which Christ had dwelt from the first.’ Newman, in many other sermons throughout his career, repeatedly refers to the symbol of the Tree of Life:

Among the many images under which the good man is described in Holy Scripture, *perhaps there is none more vivid, more beautiful, and more touching than that which represents him as some favoured and thriving tree in the garden of God’s planting*. Our original birth-place and home was a garden; and the trees by which Adam had to dress and keep, both in themselves and by the sort of attention they demanded, reminded him of the peaceful happy duties and the innocent enjoyments which were the business of his life. A garden, in its perennial freshness and soothing calm, is the best type of heaven, and its separate plants and flowers are the exactest types of the inhabitants of heaven. Accordingly it is introduced in the last page of Scripture as well as into the first; it makes its appearance at the conclusions of man’s eventual history as in the record of its opening. As in the beginning we read of the Paradise of pleasure, with the great river and its four separate streams, *with all manner of trees, fair to behold and pleasant to eat of, and above all, the Tree of Life*, - so, in the last chapter of the Apocalypse, *we are told of the river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb, which he that thirsteth may drink freely; and of the Tree of Life, bearing twelve fruits, the leaves of which were for the healing of the nations* [emphasis added].⁶³³

⁶³² Newman, ‘The Visible Temple,’ Sermon 20, *Parochial and Plain Sermons* 6, *The Newman Reader*, accessed 1 January 2019, www.newmanreader.org/works/parochial/volume6/sermon20.html. (Please note that this source was accessed online during the Covid-19 pandemic, whereas other Newman source citations refer to instances in which they were consulted in person pre-pandemic.)

⁶³³ Newman, ‘Sermon 13: The Tree Beside the Waters’ (1859) *Sermons Preached on Various Occasions*, 243-44.

These words of the Catholic Newman might have been contentious to most Anglican hearers. However, if we compare Newman's passage to Burne-Jones's early thoughts on art and religion as he discussed in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* articles, we see specific resonances between their ways of speaking about Christ:

...So new, but so familiar; those large mournful eyes, set in such sorrowful expectation, till the door shall open, the head slightly bending, even as it bowed upon the cross: it is the Son of Man standing before us, in all the beauty and sadness of our common humanity: we could call Him Brother, and inexpressively beautiful the thought seems to us: but another look, and it is the Son of God, risen and glorified, the royal crown upon His Head, and the royal robes enfolding Him, starred with jewels: so we are bowed down with awe before the Judge of quick and dead; yet there are signs of comfort, making the God whom we worship, and the Brother whom we love, one; and these are the crown of thorns budding with new leaves, and the pierced hands;- the perfect God and Perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. And while the heart is bowed downwards yet in silence, filled through and through with its glory, that wondrously lovely background, earth and sky together, comes upon one like a soft wind, when the brain is overwrought and fevered: the orchard, too, and fruit trees, till one remembers the written words of the wise king: 'As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons.' Have we not seen it many a time, that strange pale green colour in the sky at night, so bright along the east that we know the day is coming? The stars up in heaven are very bright, piercing through the boughs till they seem to hang like white blossoms among the leaves...⁶³⁴

In previous chapters, we compared this text to Burne-Jones's earlier work on *The Good Shepherd* stained glass window design (Figure 11) and among his first major paintings, *The Merciful Knight* (Figure 14).⁶³⁵ If now compared against his work on the *Tree of Life*, at the centre of the American Church in Rome mosaic scheme (Figure 71), with these and Newman's words on Christ as the Tree of Life, we see new depth and symbolic richness. Contrasted against the early works of Christ discussed in Chapter 2, the

⁶³⁴ Burne-Jones, 'Mr. Ruskin's New Volume,' 20-21. I believe these quotations are worth returning to in full, so to further reflect on connections to Newman's theology as well as to compare to his later works and quotations and how Burne-Jones is developing these ideas.

⁶³⁵ See Chapter 3, 'The Merciful Knight'.

Tree of Life becomes the axis of a much fuller vision; the notion of the ‘Translucent Christ’ becoming both the body of the church and its sacraments, a hinge between the visible and invisible world. Like Newman says, ‘the Church,’ becomes ‘*like some fair tree,*’ putting ‘out her branches and foliage, and stood complete in all manner of holy symbols and spiritual ordinances, an outward sign of that unseen Temple in which Christ had dwelt from the first.’⁶³⁶ As Burne-Jones himself discussed, he loved both the ‘Christmas Carol’ and the ‘mystical’ parts of Christianity, the expansiveness and potency of symbolism which rests entirely on the sacramental system of thinking, believing, and existing.⁶³⁷ In the words and art of his later years, Burne-Jones expands upon what he had discussed with marriage in his other *Oxford and Cambridge* article, as it connected with the sacraments, and ultimately, with its real union with God:

Of all marvels in this same universe that pass our poor philosophy I doubt not this of marriage is the very strangest, seeing to what end it has arrived at last, and from what beginning! Were one to ask the sober question now at this late hour, why was it first ordained, how would he be answered? would it solve the problem we see before us daily? Suppose he should answer to this result—“*It was ordained to bear the burden of a great mystery, the secret of the marriage of the Lamb, that we might not be without a continual symbol whereby to comprehend that holy union, that when the Bridegroom came we might know him and receive him worthily*” [emphasis added].⁶³⁸

In this image of the Tree of Life, these meanings are mystically intertwined, much as Adam and Eve parallel the New Adam and New Eve.⁶³⁹ In the ‘Visible Temple,’ Newman described the coming together of the symbols of Genesis and the Apocalypse, when ‘in the beginning

⁶³⁶ Newman, ‘The Visible Temple,’ Sermon 20, *Parochial and Plain Sermons* 6, *The Newman Reader* www.newmanreader.org/works/parochial/volume6/sermon20.html

⁶³⁷ Burne-Jones to Rooke, *Memoirs of Thomas Rooke: typescript*, 61.

⁶³⁸ Burne-Jones 55.

⁶³⁹ ‘...it was to be a second Adam and a second Eve, and the new Eve was to be the mother of the new Adam’ (Newman, ‘The Belief of Catholics concerning the Blessed Virgin, as distinct from their Devotion to her,’ *Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching*, 31-32). See also Chapter 4, ‘The Architecture of Annunciation.’

we read of the Paradise of pleasure, with the great river and its four separate streams, *with all manner of trees, fair to behold and pleasant to eat of, and above all, the Tree of Life,*' and then of 'the last chapter of the Apocalypse, *we are told of the river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb, which he that thirsteth may drink freely; and of the Tree of Life, bearing twelve fruits, the leaves of which were for the healing of the nations.*'⁶⁴⁰ This Newman explicitly relates this idea of the Tree of Life to the marriage feast that is the eucharist, what he calls 'The Gospel Feast', connecting the fruits Tree of Life and its appearances in Genesis, Canticles, Ezekiel, and Revelation, to the outward forms of the sacraments whereby 'man liveth not by bread only'.⁶⁴¹ By walking through each stage of the symbolism of the Tree of Life, Newman connects it to its incarnations in the Old Testament through to its fulfillment as the sacramental feast given by Christ. Indeed, citing the prophet, Hosea, Newman says that,

the Prophet declares in God's name, that the time was to come when the Church would call upon the corn, wine, and oil, and they would call on the earth, and the earth on the heavens, and the heavens on God; and God should answer the heavens, and the heavens should answer the earth, and the earth should answer the corn, wine, and oil, and they should answer to the wants of the Church. Now, doubtless, this may be fulfilled only in a general way; but considering Almighty God has appointed corn or bread, and wine, to be the special instruments of His ineffable grace,—He, who sees the end from the beginning, and who views all things in all their relations at once,—He, when He spoke of corn and wine, knew that the word would be fulfilled, not generally only, but even literally in the Gospel.⁶⁴²

Burne-Jones in his work may be manifesting these ideas, not simply to copy them but to combine them in a powerful and theologically stimulating way. Beginning and end cohere in the single moment and being of Christ; the events of his life, the opening to the earthly

⁶⁴⁰ John Henry Newman, 'Sermon 13: The Tree Beside the Waters' (1859) *Sermons Preached on Various Occasions*, 243-44.

⁶⁴¹ Newman, 'The Gospel Feast,' 170-172.

⁶⁴² *Ibid*, 173.

paradise, all unfold around its potent singularity. Further, he is building upon the ‘innovative’ seeds evident from his earliest writings on and works of art; for instance, the Virgin Mary presenting the grain of wheat to the dead boy to resurrect him on *The Prioress’s Tale Cabinet* (Figure 4, 1859); William Morris as knight presenting his wife with a host at the Wedding Feast of Sir Degrevaunt (Figure 3, 1860); Christ presenting the apple to the Magi in his first version for the altarpiece at St. Paul’s Brighton (Figure 5, 1861) – all in the gesture of communion, all with those ‘special instruments of His ineffable grace’ by which all things are viewed in ‘all their relation at once’, as discussed by Newman.⁶⁴³ Indeed, it may not, as the critic of the article clipping said, ‘satisfy those necessities of symbolical expression which are recorded as supremely important in ecclesiastical decoration’ and are the main task of the commissioned religious artist.⁶⁴⁴ Burne-Jones is no ordinary Victorian artist hired to depict standardised religious themes. As I have argued, he is a theologian from the outset, and his desire is not to simply ‘satisfy those necessities of symbolical expression’ but to challenge and reshape them in highly subtle ways that to some may seem, as he jokingly and yet irately put it, like heresy.⁶⁴⁵

The way the *Tree of Life* picture (and yet not a picture) works within his greater scheme of design for the apse confirms and extends this reading (Figure 71). It is one part of a composition of layers, and in fact, one cannot initially see the *Tree* until standing below it, almost directly in front of the altar. The series of layers begins – from the outside – with the *Annunciation*, which is what mostly initially obscures the *Tree* (Figure 72). This is important for understanding this reading of the *Tree* and its unique possibilities. Not only do the figures directly correspond, but the setting is built upon comparison with the gateway to paradise behind it. Centrally, there is nothing separating the Angel Gabriel and the Virgin. A glowing

⁶⁴³ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁴ Burne-Jones to Julia (Cartwright) Ady, 1890-7. MS 3264 (ff. 13-43), Beloe Papers, Lambeth Palace Library.

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid.

light from above precipitates the coming light of the Holy Spirit in the incarnation, but the landscape itself is a dry and infertile desert, devoid of natural and human life. Only when the next mosaic is visible, and one can see Christ is on the Tree, there is abundance – with Eve replacing Mary, lilies appearing at her side and children tumbling about in her arms and at her feet. Thus, as one moves closer and closer, the imagery is transforming right before the eyes: Gabriel and Mary become Adam and Eve; Eve is the New Mary; and the Gateway to Paradise is the tree, is the cross of Christ. Compare again these images to his earlier works featuring Mary, the snake, and the apple, as in the Castle Howard Annunciation (Figure 25), or more explicitly, to his rejected first version of the altarpiece at St. Paul's, Brighton, where the Christ child on Mary's lap offers the magi, and humanity, a new apple – a new pathway to salvation (Figure 5). Or recall the implicit cross in *The Blessed Damozel*, on which the whole composition hangs as the hinge of heaven and earth (Figure 8). These themes interested him from the outset. This scheme for Rome expresses further his continued deepened interest in scriptural and theological connections, developing a notion of the visible church connected to the eucharistic, bodily centre of the cross and church.

Further, if we think of the conflation of literal wood, an actual tree, with the Crucifixion of Christ, there are countless models in roodscreens – literally a 'cross-screen'. Most typical in the medieval period, they were often taken down in the Reformation only to re-inspire Gothic artists, architects, and designers to create new roodscreens in the nineteenth century. Sir Gilbert Scott would install such a screen at Hereford Cathedral in 1862, the place where Burne-Jones had been inspired by liturgy, architecture, and music in the 1840s (Figure 73). This and other such projects were architecture, and chime with Burne-Jones's words that he wanted the mosaics to have more to do with 'architecture' than anything. Roodscreens, like Burne-Jones's 'architectural' mosaics, were not meant to obscure but heighten the sense of sacredness of the sanctuary, directing the viewer's gaze to the point at which the main

ceremonies of the mass would take place at the altar. Usually these roodcreens feature a standard crucifixion (Scott's instead shows more an image of an Ascended Christ), and while they are often on a cross they are made of wood and are also surrounded by an abundance of decorative design evoking the branches of a tree. It would therefore not be an extraordinary step for Burne-Jones to unite these ideas most completely in his *Tree of Life* – a crucifixion without a cross, a tree bearing fruit; a gateway to heaven, a gateway to the altar that is not a 'picture' but rather most essentially 'architecture'. Similar to his earlier painting of the *Merciful Knight* (Figure 14), where a wooden crucifix in a shrine is transformed in animation, this image in mosaic questions its materiality and architectural context and function, thereby inquiring into the theological and artistic meaning of the materials involved in Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection.

With a theologically-trained mind, Burne-Jones could be seeing these metaphysical possibilities behind the traditional visual iconography of religious art and consequently challenging them, much as many of the theological visionaries of his youth had done. While not by definition 'heretical', his work might be exploring a controversial and mysterious theology most interested in the intimate reality of the mystery of the incarnation and its representation in the sacraments. Seeing his work this way begins to unveil fascinating and previously unseen aspects of his huge artistic project. Thus, the way he develops the *Tree of Life* – verbally and visually – is revealing for his 'theology of art' at this point in his life. Especially once we consider previous chapters' images, we see a deepening and a more subtle uniting of concepts such as the sacramental, eucharistic 'secret of the marriage of the Lamb'; of the translucent materiality of the 'Highest of All Examples' in Christ; and of the 'love between worlds' manifesting in the Virgin Mary, the New Eve, at the annunciatory moment. Burne-Jones's complex form of Christianity takes full form in the *Tree of Life* and

this extended decorative commission. This is a ‘Paschal Mystery’;⁶⁴⁶ a vision of Christ’s distinctly sacramental power at the threshold of heaven and earth, as *all* of salvation history *all* at once, that is within and beyond the ‘fettered ways’ of the church – that is the mystical body of the church itself, the central feature of the ‘mysticism’ he so loves.⁶⁴⁷ Playing upon the dogmatic and the mystical, his is a theology that does not ‘kill’ but seeks to sustain the Christian religion, expressing his ultimate ‘sympathy’ with the ‘Christian legend’.⁶⁴⁸ This ‘love between worlds’ is hung on the Tree of Life. As the figure between and uniting the New Adam and Eve, sin and redemption, Burne-Jones brings together iconography that has been present in his earliest religious pictures and fundamental to the development of his most important ‘mythological’ or ‘aesthetic’ works. This is an invisible cross combined with a visible crucifixion; a painting showing a sanctified body of a man hanging on the Tree that separates life from death, that redeems life through death, rotating along an axis of mortality and immortality. *The Tree of Life* is for the eyes of faith to understand, to perceive. ‘Few will understand it,’ Burne-Jones stated, saying ‘it isn’t a picture’.⁶⁴⁹ A material embodiment of an immaterial reality, Burne-Jones’s art re-enacts the incarnation and its implications, proposing a theology in which the soul passes into heaven through the Tree of Life which is both Christ crucified and Christ redeemed – that is the sacramental, eucharistic (and potentially ‘heretical’ to the cautious Protestant mind) material re-presented and sustained in the mystical body of the church. His design *is* that mystical body, centralising on that beautifully nude body of Christ, his sacred humanity and divinity united, his aspect multiplied innumerable just as it is on the altar in the innumerable communions taken by the faithful. He is the center where all the paths Burne-Jones depicts converge – all the angels, saints,

⁶⁴⁶ Robinson, *The Mass and Modernity: Walking to Heaven Backward*, 94-5;242-45;266-7;330. ‘.what is central...is the truth that *what the liturgy celebrates is the inscrutable Paschal Mystery* [paraphrasing St Basil and Dionysus]’ (330).

⁶⁴⁷ *Memorials*, 2:159; Burne-Jones to Rooke, *Memoirs of Thomas Matthews Rooke: transcript*, 61.

⁶⁴⁸ Burne-Jones to Rooke, *Memoirs of Thomas Matthews Rooke: transcript*, 66; Ruskin, *Art of England*, 40.

⁶⁴⁹ *Memorials*, 2:159.

evangelists, the church militant in earthly paradise, line up in this holistic vision of the body of Christ. It could express the profound mystery and potential for universality of the ‘catholic’ apostolic dogmatic mystical medieval church Burne-Jones holds as his theological ideal. Within the architectural spaces of the church, the architecture of the liturgy, ritual and of salvation history, the scheme unfolds from the Tree of Life outwards to the whole apsidal scheme, as the example of a work that ‘said as much as anything I have ever done.’⁶⁵⁰

Morning of the Resurrection

In the previous work, Burne-Jones presented a vision not only of faith but of art itself. For him, art is not simply a ‘picture’, and Burne-Jones wants to do everything to make his art ‘not a picture’.⁶⁵¹ Not a happy resolution in itself, Burne-Jones’s representations point to a vision of what may be offered beyond. Oscillating between sorrow and glory, visible and invisible, his art could be seen as ‘the one splendid venture’ that is not passive, not vaguely abstract, but based on the activity of the economy of salvation revolving around the figure of the resurrected Christ, of the mystery of the sacraments, of the expectation of Mary at the Annunciation and the cross, and the anticipated new life.⁶⁵² The art, particularly of this period, may be seen reflecting this ‘venture’ that moves between seen and unseen, and wrestles with the notion of faith.

The *Morning of Resurrection* (1886) came at this time when Burne-Jones himself was reliving and resurrecting reminisces of his past youth; where, with the distance of time, the many multitudinous influences and experiences came back with a certain degree of newness and clarity (Figure 74). He had been painting the resurrection scene since its initial commission as a church altarpiece in 1882 for St. Peter’s, Vere Street, London, around the same time for his *Tree of Life* design for the American Church in Rome mosaics. Like many

⁶⁵⁰ Burne-Jones to Rooke, *Memoirs of Thomas Matthews Rooke: typescript*, 22.

⁶⁵¹ *Memorials*, 2:159.

⁶⁵² *Memorialis*, 1:59.

of his designs, it existed on in his mind to become a canvas for exhibition at Grosvenor four years later. Both versions, much the same but slightly altered in colour, show Mary Magdalene at the tomb of Christ, flanked by two seated white angels. Christ stands in profile opposite the Magdalene, darkly robed and haloed. Mary has one hand on the tomb as she hides the other, clutching her robe and beginning to turn towards Christ in surprise. The angels also express a certain degree of fear, each holding one hand to their lips and one angel lifting up the other hand to point tentatively at Christ. The arrangement and setting quite specifically reproduces the Gospel account from John 20:

But Mary stood without at the sepulcher weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and *looked into the sepulcher*, and seeth *two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain*. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.” *And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus*. Jesus saith to her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her [emphasis added].⁶⁵³

Thus the significant components of both the altar and exhibited versions of the *Morning of Resurrection* can be held against the significant components of John 20. There appears to be a direct transferal of the Gospel narrative into visual material; a point-to-point representation that seems to quite easily and directly depict the Biblical account. However, the pieces remain enigmatic – their mood is dark and sombre, and the arrangement of the picture does not immediately line up with the long history of artistic depiction of the scene. While current

⁶⁵³ John 20: 11-18 KJV.

scholarship does not look at this work much, it nevertheless attracted attention when it was exhibited in 1886 at Grosvenor. Several significant contemporary critics perceived deeper elements of a mystery at play. ‘Here are the types of form, expression, and draperies, majestic and almost divine, with no defect of tenderness and grace, and, in this fine humanity, quite worthy of Lippi,’ said critic F.G Stephens in 1885.⁶⁵⁴ Julia Cartwright used nearly the same words – ‘grave and tender feeling’ – to open her description of the work in 1893.⁶⁵⁵ The painting remained compelling for the *Edinburgh Review* critic even as late as 1899, the year after Burne-Jones’s death: ‘No, passing from the myths that are dead to the faiths that survive, is there any tinge on the faces of saint or angel or virgin of the joyousness of that early art of Christianity....The angels at the Easter tomb, covering their lips in the presence of the arisen Christ, have no gladness in the resurrection of their King.’⁶⁵⁶

These comments, within themselves holding a certain element of contradiction (‘almost divine’ and ‘fine humanity’) and also contradicting each other (‘quite worthy of Lippi’ against ‘no...tinge...of the joyousness of the early Christianity’), reveal how the painting might worthily represent specific elements of a mystery ‘almost divine’ also present in the broader scope of Burne-Jones’s career. As we have seen before, his interpretation of the scene can be related to a complex, theologically informed vision of art and its mission. The painting’s complicated theological implications are perhaps why the work has long been neglected after its initial reception by critics such as these.⁶⁵⁷ Originally commissioned by Dr. Charles Bland Radcliffe, a noteworthy physician specialising in diseases of the nervous

⁶⁵⁴ F.G. Stephens, ‘Edward Burne-Jones, A.R.A.’, *The Portfolio: An Artistic Periodical*, vol. 16 (Jan, 1885), 230.

⁶⁵⁵ Julia Cartwright, ‘Edward Burne-Jones, A.R.A.’, *Art Journal* (Jan 189), 8.

⁶⁵⁶ Taylor Una Ashworth, attrib., ‘ART. II. – Catalogue of the New Gallery,’ *The Edinburgh Review* 189, Iss. 387 (Jan 1899), 36.

⁶⁵⁷ However, in her dissertation, Crossman takes a look at the work, its commission history, and notes initial explanations of the oddities within the work (*Art as Lived Religion*, 181-192).

system and a friend of Burne-Jones, the work could be read alongside the theology of Frederick Denison Maurice (1805-1872), from whom the memorial was in honour.⁶⁵⁸ Maurice had served as rector of St. Peter's, Vere Street from 1860-69 and was a particular hero for Radcliffe.⁶⁵⁹ Maurice is best known for his views on Christian Socialism and an eclectic mix of theological viewpoints that recognised the 'catholicity' of the Church of England, its reliance on tradition and the sacraments (in a seeming similarity to Tractarian thought), and yet presented a more 'liberal' theology that crossed denominations, particularly in regards to baptism, which he presented as more distinctly symbolic than sacramental, and a view of eternal punishment that emphasised the economy of grace over the economy of sin.⁶⁶⁰ Burne-Jones himself had encountered Maurice in a lecture at Maurice's own Working Men's College – this is where he had also met Rossetti for the first time.⁶⁶¹ It could have been Burne-Jones's friendship with Radcliffe and earlier admiration for Maurice that compelled him to do the commission, and Colette Crossman argues that Burne-Jones's unique depiction of the resurrection scene reflects Maurice's Christian Socialist views: 'Showing her without the traditional attributes of ointment jar, flowing hair, and kneeling posture, Burne-Jones transformed her [Mary Magdalene] from the sensuous "fallen woman" of Roman Catholicism into a dignified any-woman representing the Christian belief that Jesus's redemption is offered to all humanity, another egalitarian theme of Maurice's.'⁶⁶²

This argument is an enriching contribution, giving perspective on the different and prevailing theological views in this context that certainly influenced the execution of the

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid. This is Crossman's main argument about the piece.

⁶⁵⁹ 'Charles Bland Radcliffe,' *The Royal College of Physicians*, accessed 5 April 2020, <https://history.rcplondon.ac.uk/inspiring-physicians/charles-bland-radcliffe>.

⁶⁶⁰ Frederick Denison Maurice, *The Theological Essays* (Cambridge: MacMillan and Co., 1853); 'Frederick Denison Maurice: British Theologian,' *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed 5 April 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Frederick-Denison-Maurice>; Crossman, *Art as Lived Religion*, 185.

⁶⁶¹ *Memorials*, 1:128-29. He had heard Maurice speak 'in a true Carlylese spirit, which was very pleasing' about T.B. Macaulay's *History of England*.

⁶⁶² Crossman, *Art as Lived Religion*, 181-2; 185.

work. However, such an interpretation relies on the assumption Burne-Jones is merely copying the theological ideas of his patrons into his commissioned works. Instead, I argue his depiction, in this and other scenes, cannot be so easily aligned with the theology of his patrons. I believe that reading Maurice's theology directly onto *The Morning of the Resurrection* leaves much of the painting's potentials aside. Why does it avert direct historical explanation and sustains mystery? Why, of all the works under discussion in modern scholarship, might it be nearly explicitly avoided and forgotten? How might it be a relevant piece to puzzling together the ways in which his theological background works in pieces across his oeuvre at this (and other) significant points in his career? Indeed, if he was depicting an 'any-woman' to whom Jesus offers redemption, why does Burne-Jones choose to show the doubt, the hesitation, and the misrecognition of the narrative? If this redemption were freely offered to 'any-woman', would not an image of recognition on Mary's part, and open-handed reception on Jesus's part, be more suited to that message? Instead, a study of how this painting works – in its designs and versions as an altar and as a painting – will show how this slightly off-kilter presentation of a very standard scene for sacred art could be seen to present Burne-Jones's distinctly theological exegesis of art in a new light at this stage of his life.

Noli me tangere. 'Do not touch me,' - this is the address Christ makes to Mary when she tries to reach for him. The exchange has been the subject of much artistic and theological discourse, featuring repeatedly as the title of art works so to underline the distance, the separation, and the gap between what is earthly and what is divine. The return of God is experienced as a departure; a presence that is an inevitably impending absence.⁶⁶³ Instead of being achieved and relished, love is extended, suspended, and sustained in Christ's words of

⁶⁶³ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Noli me tangere: On the Raising of the Body* trans. Sarah Clift, Pascale Anne Brault, and Michael Naas (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

warning; in the Magdalene's inability to fully embrace and therefore unite with her beloved Saviour. It is a drama suitable for the subjects of artworks striving after beautiful ideals. Much like his art-historical precedents, Burne-Jones's painting lingers on that drama which seems to have no conclusive end for the reunited characters. The composition highlights the great distance between the figures by centrally placing the gaping concavities of the rock and open, empty tomb behind and between Mary and Christ. However, Mary Magdalene's encounter with the Risen Christ at the tomb is more complicated than that, not lining up with an art-historical precedent like Titian, whose *Noli me tangere* at the National Gallery in London shows the Magdalene at the foot of Christ, begging to 'touch' him (Figure 75). Though participating in the art historical dialogue with the subject of Mary Magdalene and Christ, Burne-Jones differentiates himself and his complex definition of art by focusing on the moment *just before* the paradigmatic 'Do not touch.' Unlike Titian's *Noli me tangere*, Burne-Jones's Mary seems to be resisting rather than reaching out for the touch of Christ. Her moment is of fear – 'And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.'⁶⁶⁴ She does not recognize him. Revelation is suspended and again, draws out and suspends revelation as a question not yet answered. Christ offers the means of revelation – this is made most apparent in the sketches for the painting, where Burne-Jones actually ponders different positions of an offering hand (Figures 76-77). He reaches for her – she resists. In the narrative to follow, she will then reach for him – and he will refuse.

However, Burne-Jones chooses to hide the offering hand of Christ in the final painting, further underlying the ambivalence of the moment and the ultimate absence and unavailability of physical touch. Within this context, seeing and disbelief, absence at the very moment Christ is making himself present, is represented. The final painting, by both showing

⁶⁶⁴ John 20: 11-18 KJV.

Mary's resistance and eventually deciding against extended gesture of Christ, emphasises this tension, this dialogue of heaven and earth that presents the possibility of an impossibility. This is a development that parallels Burne-Jones's work on *The Merciful Knight* (Figure 14), where physical and divine intimacy were offered and held up in the repeated sketches he made for the work.⁶⁶⁵

In this later work, it is a push and pull of divine and earthly, of love extended and then turned away in the strains and pressures of two worlds. Two beings are on a threshold, in a moment where the very parameters of life and death are overcome by the impossible momentary presence, the physical appearance, of eternity that is the resurrected Christ. By focusing on this moment of appearing but not seeing, revealing but not revelation, Burne-Jones forefronts art as something like Christ – which, in all its glory – appeals to truth but then cannot be touched once apprehended.

This push-and-pull between worlds perhaps is not as pessimistic as one might initially think; sober, indeed, but not the 'elaborate machine of denial' David Peters Corbett seeks to see in Burne-Jones's artistic project.⁶⁶⁶ The ideas Burne-Jones proposes in this painting are essentially bound up with the Tractarian and Anglo-Catholic doctrines he studied so intensely in his youth, where the doctrine of 'reserve' was upheld; the beauty of the unexplained 'mystery' honoured; and the ancient liturgical rites of the mass maintained, especially those practices of ritual surrounding the eucharist, where barriers of *not touching* and *not seeing* become the fundamental mediation of the living divine presence. In these circumstances, the moments of shrouding, of hiding, of intimate and yet tentative - mediated and restricted - touch and sight become the very necessary mechanism for communion. This would be opposed to a more explicitly 'egalitarian' presentation of Christ with hand extended and

⁶⁶⁵ See Chapter 3, 'The Merciful Knight'.

⁶⁶⁶ Corbett, *World in Paint*, 68; 70; 81.

Mary in recognition that I would argue may be more in line with more liberal theologies of Christian socialism discussed above.

Again, we must return to the approach described by Burne-Jones in reference to his ‘Tree of Life’ design (Figure 69). He speaks of Christ centrally ‘hanging with arms outspread *but not crucified: the cross is turned into a big tree all turned over with leaves*’ in which ‘everything is done to make it *not a picture*...and it can’t be sold and will be in Rome and will last for ever [emphasis added].’⁶⁶⁷ Burne-Jones is positioning the moment, its setting and its characters in a slightly inverted, off-kilter manner so to open up the potentials and possibilities, the tensions and conflations and convergences, to the eternal circularity of salvation history. Thus, just as in the ‘Tree of Life’, Mary Magdalene cannot only not touch Christ, she does not recognize Christ – and in her un-recognition, comes the revelation of his offering of himself, his sacrifice, his resurrection, and his victory. Burne-Jones’s Christ in Rome is depicted in his standard pose of crucifixion and yet, is not crucified. The cross, nevertheless, remains, and underscores the underlying presence of what is not explicitly shown, its universality, and its eternity. In the sketches for Christ in the painted altar and canvas of *The Morning of the Resurrection*, Burne-Jones’s contemplation of Christ’s outstretched hand – and ultimate decision to hide it – is quite revealing. Yet more sketches of angels also prove significant in underlining this theme. In a catalogue for the 1899 Burlington Arts Club exhibition of Edward Burne-Jones’s works immediately after his death, contributed to and largely annotated by Georgiana and Phillip Burne-Jones, there is a listing for two studies in watercolour and pastel of ‘The Angels at the Sepulchre’ in one frame for *The Morning of the Resurrection*. The listing includes a quotation of an inscription on the sketches: ‘NON EST HIC SED SURREXIT RECORDAMINI QUALITER, LOCVTVS EST

⁶⁶⁷ *Memorials*, 2:159.

VOBIS’ – ‘He is not here but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet Galilee’.⁶⁶⁸ This portion of Scripture references the earlier portions of the narrative recounted in both Luke and John’s gospels, when the group of women initially go to the tomb and discover that Jesus’s body is missing. However, in the eventual painting, Christ is there but not recognized; resurrected and redeemed but not for the touching. These complex references point to these two distinct points in the narrative: Christ’s initial disappearance and the hope of his resurrection and then the resurrection itself, which initially is met with doubt, fear, and unrecognition. By emphasising these points in his work, Burne-Jones continue to play out this absence-presence paradox that ultimately rests all faith, grace, and hope in the (im)possible possibilities extended by God through Christ, his incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection.⁶⁶⁹

We can further understand these extensive complications when the original painting, as an altarpiece, is seen *in situ* in church (Figure 78-80). This is the initial context for the idea where Burne-Jones flourishes when working in this ‘fettered way,’ as lovingly obedient and observant of ‘the severe limitations’ of the work’s essential materiality within St. Peter’s as he is when designing the mosaics for the American Church in Rome.⁶⁷⁰ The painting functioned as only a single part within a greater coordination of decorative elements: the altarpiece was to appear below a complete set of windows that Burne-Jones had already designed in 1880. The main set of these appear directly above the altar, directly above the *Morning of Resurrection* altarpiece. While on the south side, images of Christ entering Jerusalem, the reception of souls into heaven, and Saints James and John healing the lame

⁶⁶⁸ *Exhibition of Drawings and Studies by Sir Edward Burne-Jones, BART* (London: Printed for the Burlington Fine Arts Club, 1899); Luke 24:6 KJV.

⁶⁶⁹ Newman, *Fifteen Sermons*, 23-6. See Chapter 1 ‘John Henry Newman,’ for a discussion of Christ as a revealed ‘object’, as revelation.

⁶⁷⁰ *Memorials*, 2:159.

appear, these main windows feature at their centre a pane depicting Christ and the Samaritan woman at the well (Figure 79). Two angels with scrolls flank the side panels.

This is an unusual choice of imagery above the altar. (It is not clear if the choice was made by Radcliffe, by Burne-Jones himself, or in a collaboration of friends.) As a theme, ‘Christ and the Samaritan Woman’ is not a staple in the choice of scenes for stained glass cycles, let alone the main featured window above the main featured space of the church. However, like the altarpiece below, its unusual qualities become more informative for an understanding of the vision Burne-Jones had for the window, and most significantly, for the *Morning of Resurrection* scene soon to be dislocated from its church context in its later painted exhibited form. It therefore is important to look at these pieces in a unity as they appear in the church.

Built between 1721-4, St. Peter’s Vere Street – initially called Marylebone or Oxford Chapel – is a distinctly neoclassical structure that could be considered quite different from Burne-Jones’s designing style.⁶⁷¹ Whether Burne-Jones disliked the building or not, he nevertheless revels and innovates within the ‘severe limitations’ of the church, using the pictorial and compositional elements of the painting and windows in subtle coordination with and as a distinct part of the architectural style and arrangement of the space.⁶⁷² The altarpiece itself appears lower than anticipated. It is positioned right behind the table-top of the altar and therefore appears to directly rest on that surface. Burne-Jones understands the visual consequence of this placement – the central placement of the cross in the middle of the altar obstructs the centre of the painting. But as we see in the photographs of the work in place, no element of the painting is obstructed by the cross; in fact, the cross becomes a part of the painting, stretching its connective arms between the resurrected image of Christ and the

⁶⁷¹ Crossman, *Art as Lived Religion*, 182.

⁶⁷² *Memorials*, 2:159.

shocked figure of Mary. The vast gap of the tomb separating them is now filled, uniting the painted appearance of the Resurrected Christ with the actual presence of the cross on the table.

However, the complex circularity of references does not end: the cross points up to the stained-glass window that he had already designed for the space above the altar. The narrative of Christ and the Samaritan woman is as follows in John 4:

There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me a drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou has well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that sadist thou truly. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet [...] I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.⁶⁷³

The stained-glass image clearly represents these elements: a woman, Christ, and a well between them. A vase rests on the lip of the well – the woman holds it with one hand and grasps the rope with the other. She is austere and near expressionless. Christ opposite her,

⁶⁷³ John 4: 4-26 KJV.

haloed, does not look at her. Rather, he glances down at and reaches for the vase, extending his hand and placing it on the lip of the container while putting his other hand to his heart. These elements themselves evoke no sense of the strange or obscure – they represent the basic motifs of the Gospel while not directly indicating what portion of the interaction which they are specifically engaged. However, these elements point beyond themselves, relying on the ‘fettered way’ Burne-Jones works – a theological way that inherently relies on the ‘severe limitations’ of the physical world on art – on divinity itself.⁶⁷⁴

The style of the well relies on the architectural language of the church. It is bulky, classical, and has pillars above it much like we see in the real pillars framing the window. This is the same tomb structure that appears below in the *Morning of Resurrection* inside the cave where the angles are seated. Thus, connecting these two tombs is the cross situated between the painted tomb, which points up at the well. As a well, it digs into the earth and points down to the cave, to the empty tomb, to the cross that fills it. Therefore, he creates a circularity ultimately held together by the cross, much as in the American Church in Rome designs.

Like the multiplication of the structural elements of tomb and well, the figures themselves are multiplied. Once we see their interconnections, the reflecting figures underline and extend portions of the respective Gospel narratives. ‘Mary Magdalene/Samaritan Woman’ become one in the echoing of their positions, in their respective reactions within Scripture and within the painting itself. The Samaritan woman questions Christ, his origins, his worthiness to drink from the well. This can be directly compared to the hesitancy in the reaction of Mary, who, like the Samaritan woman, initially refuses and turns away the very appearance of Christ. However, what each image ultimately

⁶⁷⁴ *Memorials*, 2:159.

suspends and supports in each other –that which is ultimately fulfilled in the cross at the altar and in the act of communion – is Christ’s proclamations: ‘I, the one speaking to you – I am he [the Messiah],’ and ‘go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’⁶⁷⁵ It is an act of annunciation, and through annunciation, making present and real to these women and the faithful his resurrected body in his church. We thus get a broader theological perspective on the Gospel of John, seeing how Burne-Jones uniquely connects the various elements of the scene.

The extension does not end there, literally and exegetically. Even after the completion of both the altarpiece and the exhibited painting, Burne-Jones was asked to add memorial wings to the earlier altar and decorative scheme. The choice of subject, composition, and its juxtaposition with the earlier central portion of the altarpiece continue to unravel the implications and exegetical potentials of the *Morning of Resurrection* scene. Annunciation panels are added on either side (Figure 80). The design for the Mary and Angel Gabriel is actually taken from a highly personal work he had created for stained glass, not only a creation but dedication and patronage of his own at St. Margaret of Antioch’s in Rottingdean, where he and Georgiana were spending many of their later days in their holiday home there. In the design at Rottingdean, repeated here at St. Peter’s Vere Street, a hesitant Mary receives the news that she is to bear the Word of God made Flesh which she ponders in her heart. “‘How shall this be,’” she begins her initial questioning of the angel and his incredible news in the corresponding chapter of Luke. “‘Seeing I know not a man?’” To which the angel declares, “‘The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.’”⁶⁷⁶

⁶⁷⁵ John 4: 4-26 KJV; John 20: 11-18 KJV.

⁶⁷⁶ Luke 1: 34-5 KJV.

Thus, the questioning, hesitancy, and ‘pondering’ of Mary Magdalene at the tomb is now not only underlined through the doubled figure of the woman at the well above her but tripled in the image of Mary and the angel, extending the back and forth of misrecognition and recognition, misperception and perception, misunderstanding and acceptance that ultimately leads to a declaration of and witness to who Christ is as the ‘Son of God’.

Therefore this dialogic context of images within St. Peter’s Vere Street’s altarpiece emphasises the whole internal structure of the Gospel of John and the means of revelation, resurrection, and redemption where ‘in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God’ and then made into flesh so that ‘all things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.’⁶⁷⁷ The annunciatory wings flanking the resurrection underlines the mystery occurring at the altar. By splitting the Annunciation down the middle and placing each half on either side of the central *Morning of Resurrection* scene, he follows a similar format as his early triptych for St. Paul’s, Brighton (Figure 5).⁶⁷⁸ This mechanical, compositional similarity develops the themes the early altarpiece considered – resurrection, redemption, and salvation through the sacramental offering of the very body of the baby Jesus - and develops them in the even more provocative context of the resurrection morning. Considering the doctrines Burne-Jones studied and admired in the Tractarians, we can understand the parallels he is making.⁶⁷⁹ Thus, much as God would be made man through Mary in the incarnation and nativity, Christ would be present in the elements on the altar at consecration and available to all who would recognize God when summoned as the Virgin Mary was; who would thirst for the living waters as the Samaritan woman did; who would see and adore him as the Mary Magdalene would at the tomb. Here

⁶⁷⁷ John 1: 1-3 KJV.

⁶⁷⁸ Chapter 2, ‘Early Religious Work’.

⁶⁷⁹ Chapter 1, ‘The Holy Eucharist’.

in these images it is more than sight that is involved, it is an action that calls for re-action, for re-presentation, for renewal, for resurrection, and participation.⁶⁸⁰ It is Christ offering himself up for love to the point of death - the central message of the crucifixion and a message most powerfully felt in Burne-Jones's designs when the windows and paintings are seen in sacramental union with the altar at church where people would be reliving, remembering, and worshipping that continual and ever-present 'offering up' of Christ's love in the mass.⁶⁸¹ This is the message that each image points and leads to: a sacramental phenomenon that could be embedded in the central painting of the *Morning of the Resurrection*, even when it is removed from the context of the church.

Thus, when we consider the Biblical passage, the stylisation of the image itself, and the images below and surrounding it, we can see the disparate works of the altarpiece working in exegetical unity, with parallels across and between them ultimately connecting them in and towards a theological understanding of the revelation of Christ, his role, presence and absence in communion, in church, and in the greater world. As initially mentioned, Burne-Jones studied all four Gospels in Greek and Latin and read supplementary texts so to understand and consequently write essays in examinations about them at university, at times even practicing comparisons in the notebook now held in Cambridge's Fitzwilliam Museum.⁶⁸² The nature of John's Gospel is significant for a comprehension of how this painting works as a whole within its decorative scheme and Burne-Jones's theological vision. Of the four Gospels, John's was the most distinctly theological. Given from the post-Resurrection perspective, it seeks to emphasise the eternity of the revelation and salvation of

⁶⁸⁰ Pusey, *The Presence of Christ*, 21;38.

⁶⁸¹ 'If the world has its fascinations, so surely does the Altar of the living God... behold Mary pleads with us... and offers the Eternal Child for us to caress, while sounds of cherubim are heard all round signing from out the fulness of the Divine Glory' (Newman, *Discourses to Mixed Congregations*, 70. Also see Chapter 1 'John Henry Newman').

⁶⁸² Two notebooks kept by the artist while a student at Oxford. c. 1853-56. Paintings, Drawings, and Prints. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. See Chapter 1, 'At University'.

Christ in God's uncreated word.⁶⁸³ His Gospel does not include the simple parables the Synoptic Gospels are known for, and the 'Johannine' language, though limited, is more mysterious, developing contrasting and amplified progressions of metaphor, and focused on dialogic exchanges where misunderstandings, and misrecognitions like those of Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman at the well, and, finally Mary Magdalene at the tomb and 'doubting Thomas' feature.⁶⁸⁴ John's Gospel, in its original Greek, focusses on the differences between earthly sight and divine perception, and various types of human vision (and therefore, life) that Christ at once confounds, renews, and restores. Much of Burne-Jones's art relates to these transitional states of seeing, which are the misrecognitions, hesitations, and ponderings. This understanding of the difficulties of love between worlds is bridged through the material presence of the eternal Father in Christ. 'The doxology of Creation,' scholar Jeremy Begbie said in his recent piece on 'Christ and the Cultures: Christianity and the Arts':

has found its summation in Christ: the one through which all things were created became part of a creation whose praise had been corrupted, and *in the crucified and risen Lord, creation is offered back to the Father, redirected toward its originally intended goal. The Spirit now struggles in creation to bring about what has already been achieved in Christ. We are now invited into this movement in order to enable creation to be more fully what it was created to be*⁶⁸⁵

This focus on Jesus, the always pre-existent and eternal redeemer and messiah, in John's Gospel is thus emphasised in Begbie's call for a new understanding of the theology of art – strangely echoing Burne-Jones's late statements remembered by Dr. Sebastian Evans, a friend and debating partner in these final years of Burne-Jones's life. According to Evans, an agnostic, Burne-Jones challenged him saying:

Faith, not amount of achievement – which, at best, must be infinitesimally small – that is the great thing. Have *you* faith,

⁶⁸³ Stephen Verney, *Water into Wine: An Introduction to John's Gospel* (London: Fount Paperbacks, 1985).

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid*; John 20: 28 KJV.

⁶⁸⁵ Jeremy Begbie, 'Christ and the Cultures: Christianity and the Arts' in *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 109

my dear? Do you ever think of this poor old woman, our Mother, trudging on and on towards nothing and nowhere, and swear by all your gods that she shall yet go gloriously some day, with sunshine and flowers and chanting of her children that love her and she loves? I can never think of collective humanity as brethren and sisters; they seem to me ‘Mother’ – more nearly Mother than Mother Nature herself. *To me, this weary, toiling, groaning world of men and women is none other than Our Lady of the Sorrows. It lies on you and me and all the faithful to make her Our Lady of the Glories.* Will she ever be so? Will she? Will she? She shall be, if your toil and mine, and the toil of a thousand ages of them that come after us can make her so!

That was an awful thought of Ruskins, that artists paint God for the world. There’s a lump of greasy pigment at the end of Michael Angelo’s hog-bristle brush, and by the time it has been laid on the stucco, there is something there that all men with eyes recognize as divine. Think of what it means. *It is the power of bringing God into the world – making God manifest. It is giving back her Child that was crucified to Our Lady of Sorrows* [emphasis added].⁶⁸⁶

This notion of the ‘Lady of Sorrows,’ which instead replaces ‘Father’ with this vast complex figure of the Mother Mary evocative of the image of Pieta, can be visualised as the tripled forms of the three waiting, hesitant, or doubting women in the *Morning of the Resurrection*: Christ here, as in Christ on the *Tree of Life*, is being mysteriously ‘given back’ to Mary Magdalene, the Virgin Mary, the Second Eve, and ultimately all ‘the toddles of humanity’.⁶⁸⁷ This is in line with what Begbie says when he confirms that ‘whatever Christian art is, it will be an art which takes for its final reference point the raising of the crucified Son of God from the dead. Such an art will inevitably resound with an inner joy, though it may be a joy won through despair...It will be “realistic” in that it will be propelled by the irreversible reality of the raising of Jesus from the dead. And so far as this happens, there will be an anticipation of the ultimate goal of creation.’⁶⁸⁸ It is, as Burne-Jones said, ‘the central idea of it [medieval

⁶⁸⁶ *Memorials* 2:257.

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid*; *Ibid*, 2:159.

⁶⁸⁸ Begbie, ‘Christ and the Cultures: Christianity and the Arts,’ 114.

Christianity] and all it has gathered to itself made the Europe that I exist in... all belong to it.⁶⁸⁹ It makes Ruskin's assessment in 1884 that Burne-Jones's greatest skill is how he 'harmonizes' all with the greatest of the 'Christian legend' viable, opening the door for new and deeper assessments of artistic and theological innovations.⁶⁹⁰

Thus, Burne-Jones's largely forgotten piece, where it may seem that 'no...is there any tinge on the faces of saint or angel or virgin of the joyousness of that early art of Christianity' which, while it continually recognised the struggle, as continually anticipated the triumph of light over darkness and joy over sadness.⁶⁹¹

Holistically, the piece can represent a Day of Judgment, happening every moment for all times through and in Christ. 'Day of Judgment?' Burne-Jones had told Sebastian Evans:

It is a synonym for the present moment – it is eternally going on. It is not so much a moment – it is just a line that has no breadth between past and future. There is not – cannot be, if you think it out – any other Day of Judgment. It is not in the 'nature of things.' The *Dies irae dies illa* [the day of wrath, that day] is everlastingly dissolving the ages into ashes everywhere. It is Nature herself, *natura*, not past or future, but the eternal being born, the sum of things as they are, not as they have been or will be. What I am driving at is this: We are a living part, however small, of things as they are. If we believe that things as they are can be made better than they are, and in that faith set to work to help the betterment to the best of our ability, however limited, we are, and cannot help being, children of our Kingdom. If we disbelieve in the possibility of betterment, or don't try to help it forward, we are and cannot help being damned. It is the 'things that are' that is the touchstone – the trial – the Day of Judgment.⁶⁹²

⁶⁸⁹ *Memorials*, 2:159.

⁶⁹⁰ Ruskin, *Art of England*, 40.

⁶⁹¹ Taylor Una Ashworth, attrib., 'ART. II - Catalogue of the New Gallery,' *The Edinburgh Review* 189, Iss. 387 (Jan. 1899), 36.

⁶⁹² *Memorials* 2:256.

The key becomes the ever-present eternity of faith within your life, ‘the power of bringing God into the world – making God manifest. It is giving back her Child that was crucified to Our Lady of Sorrows.’⁶⁹³ We see it in the ‘Tree of Life,’ in the Christ who *was* crucified now hanging with outspread, forgiving arms on his tree; in the redeemed Eve below, who, in her prefigurative references, becomes the redemptive Mary of the Annunciation, surrounded by lilies and the ‘toddles’ of the human race.⁶⁹⁴ She at once looks at and holds her child, her children of the world saved in and through Christ’s cross. It opens the way for a more complex theological understanding of the appearance of Christ to the Magdalene on Resurrection Morning, to whom, standing as a lady of sorrow weeping at his tomb, the unrecognized Christ shall offer himself to her, asking, ‘Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?’⁶⁹⁵ Like the mosaics, we might imagine that in its original form as an altarpiece, ‘it has more to do with architecture, and isn’t a picture a bit.’⁶⁹⁶ Hanging behind the altar space, it becomes more than a picture – ‘it can’t be sold...and will last forever’.⁶⁹⁷ It becomes, through misunderstanding, apprehension, and even fear, a gateway for understanding, an opportunity for Christ to repeatedly offer himself to the viewer as he would on the altar itself just below. Even when it is recreated on canvas for exhibition and dislocated from its intended place above an altar, it retains this same purpose, holding within it and even heightening its sense of ‘leading-on’ to a greater mystery. Within and outside of the specific context of a church and its worship, Christ crucified and Christ resurrected remain central to this art work and Burne-Jones’s particularly theological vision for art as a whole. Whether religious or mythic, Burne-Jones expressed beauty in a theological way and

⁶⁹³ *Memorials*, 2: 257.

⁶⁹⁴ *Memorials*, 159.

⁶⁹⁵ John 20: 15 KJV.

⁶⁹⁶ *Memorials*, 2:159.

⁶⁹⁷ *Ibid*; Though later, the altarpiece at St. Peter’s, Vere Street, was taken down and sold at the Sotheby’s auction of *Fine Victorian Paintings* of 1973.

presents a unique vision for a theology of art in the specifically religious context of these examples.

Conclusion

The picture from Chaucer's Prioress' Tale which Edward completed this spring was the one designed in Red Lion Square forty years before, and the composition of the figures of the Virgin and the little Christian boy remains exactly as he drew them – the vision had not changed. The background, however, is altered, a city replacing the landscape. As he was fitting in the poppies that grow up in front of and around the figures, some one remarked upon the importance of first lines in a composition. 'Yes,' he said, 'they come straight from the heart.'⁶⁹⁸

Edward Burne-Jones was again painting *The Prioress's Tale* in 1898, the year of his death (Figure 81). He had just been designing this theme for the *Kelmscott Chaucer*, a vast project that he and Morris had begun in 1892 containing the text and images of the Chaucerian tales they had both loved from the outset of their friendship back in the 1850s. The designs for the book, meticulously drawn and held now at the Fitzwilliam Museum's Graham Robertson Study Room in Cambridge, continue to evidence his love for working on images for vast projects (Figure 82). Indeed, Georgiana recalls how Burne-Jones described that 'I never could understand anything but a picture painted in the place it is intended to fill, never cared for a travelling picture, though mine are all that, never really cared for anything but architecture and the arts that connect with it.'⁶⁹⁹ Though here he is self-depreciatory about it, saying all his works were 'travelling' pictures, even his 'travelling' exhibition paintings come out of a process that is in constant dialogical relation to bigger schemes connected to the 'architecture' of a book, like *The Earthly Paradise*⁷⁰⁰ or *The Kelmscott Chaucer*, or the literal architecture of a church window or tapestry. His designs for windows, especially as he became lead designer of Morris&Co. in the 1870s, flow out of him, with cartoons mixing

⁶⁹⁸ *Memorials*, 2:333.

⁶⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 333-4.

⁷⁰⁰ See 'Cupid and Psyche' in Chapter 4.

with his sketches for major paintings. Projects for exhibition grow out of projects for church decoration; his desire to design for ‘architecture and the arts that connect with it’ structure the very compositional mechanisms within his art.⁷⁰¹ His vision is one set within a complex system of relation – relations of physical spaces and of people, of the exteriority of design and the interiority of the soul. Building upon the architecture of this world, Burne-Jones uses the foundations of his studies and experiences in churches, in theology, and in history to weave a network of ideas in art to signal to that which is beyond this world – to beauty, to the supernatural, to the divine.

The argument of this thesis has run counter to the popular opinion of scholarship on Burne-Jones. Most consideration of his art has been quite apart from the facts and features of his religious background, theological training, and his constant work for churches across the wide-ranging spectrum of Christian belief in nineteenth century England. Only a select few scholars have sought to examine some of his religious background, his artistic projects in the context of the respective churches they were designed for and how they were received, or certain religious concepts or influences as they could be compared to his art.⁷⁰² However, I contested that we must study the *theology* that formed his outlook, inspired his creativity, and enriched his art. Our understanding of his theological background needs to be expanded and deepened so that we can begin to unpack the expansive, nuanced nature of Burne-Jones’s early training and mature work. Thus, this dissertation presents not just a rehearsal of his university curriculum and the context for and reception of his church commissions. In addition to these elements, I undertook a more comprehensive study of the theology – its theologians, liturgies, and controversies – that shaped Burne-Jones. Doing so contributes to an understanding of the implications of that theology across Burne-Jones’s art – religious and

⁷⁰¹ Such as with the ‘Architecture of Annunciation’, discussed in Chapter 4.

⁷⁰² See particularly Crossman, Dormant, and Bullough.

mythical. By interpreting and positing his work as a ‘theology of art’, we see through and beyond the theological influences into his unique, creative approach; into an art that is constantly putting forward *theological* propositions on the relation between real and ideal, heaven and earth, God, love, soul, and man.

His early works of Christ, such as the *Good Shepherd* and the *Merciful Knight*, and his mature works of Mary, his mythological themes and late projects for church spaces, all evidence this deepening interrelation. Indeed, he may call himself a ‘heretic’, and his own personal religious affiliations remain ambiguous.⁷⁰³ Nevertheless, his ‘theology of art’ sustains the many philosophical, metaphysical, and doctrinal principles he studied so fervently in his youth. His ‘innovations’ may cause uproar, confusion or resistance, but his final works ultimately question their artistic means, subjects, and symbolism, to pose greater questions about the relationship between God and Man; the ‘one splendid venture’ that John Henry Newman set him on and the possibility of ‘love between worlds’ heavenly and earthly.⁷⁰⁴ This is what makes his artwork in itself a ‘theology’, the study of God and the divine. It is at once a very personal and public study, with the lines of his designs coming ‘straight from the heart’ and yet extending to the architecture of the church, the home, and the world.⁷⁰⁵

In the first chapter, I presented the necessary background for Burne-Jones’s life and the context of his study of theology from his days at Grammar School to his departure from the University of Oxford. This chapter was formed by my broad survey of church and theological history *and* intimate original archival research into the figures of the Oxford Movement that surrounded Burne-Jones. Considering Burne-Jones’s keen interests in the

⁷⁰³ Burne-Jones to Julia (Cartwright) Ady, 1890-7. MS 3264 (ff. 13-43), Beloe Papers, Lambeth Palace Library.

⁷⁰⁴ Lago, *Burne-Jones Talking*, 28; *Memorials*, 1: 59.

⁷⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 2: 333-4.

particular aspects of church history and active engagement with contemporary Tractarian liturgy and controversy, I focused on delving into the incarnational theology of John Henry Newman and debates surrounding the sacraments, particularly the eucharist, as argued by Pusey and Wilberforce. What these theological notions are and how Burne-Jones engaged with them is useful for how we may move from simply having a historical appreciation of his background into direct interpretations of how and why his art engaged, deployed, and developed theological questions, themes, and methods.

Chapters 2 and 3 considered Burne-Jones's two non-fictional essays in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* during his 'time of transition' from theological studies to studies, and a career, in art. These chapters show the impact of theological language and concepts as Burne-Jones employs them to textually explain art. It is therefore Burne-Jones's own words that give us a more complex picture of his own particular 'theology of art' – a theology of art interested at its core in the sacramental model of the eucharist and how art may enter into a dialogic relation of love conveyed between heaven and earth. A selection of early artworks shows Burne-Jones's attempt to put these principles into action. My unique interpretation of his articles alongside projects such as *The Prioress's Tale Cabinet*, *The Blessed Damozel*, the *Good Shepherd* window, and *The Merciful Knight* presents his theology at work in art. It is the connection between these works, Burne-Jones's own words, and the theology put forward in Chapter 1 that displays his innovative point of view at the outset of his career and provides methodological grounds for moving into his mature career as his ideas, his art – his own theology – develops.

Chapter 4 took John Ruskin on his word when he said, in 1884, that Burne-Jones was an 'indefatigable scholar' who 'harmonized' all the 'mythic' tales with all the 'loveliest

traditions of the Christian legend'.⁷⁰⁶ By examining the 'architecture' at work in the Annunciations of his mature career, I argued the 'architecture of annunciation' extended into his work designing *Cupid and Psyche*, a theme of perpetual interest to him from the 1860s until his death. I devoted detailed analysis to the designs for the *Earthly Paradise* that he had donated to Ruskin's Teaching Collection, comparing the series to his designs for the Kensington Green commission and later paintings featuring scenes from the series. Close attention to his process of design for projects in church decoration, book illustration, and room decoration showed his creative combination of structures both physical and theological.

In Chapter 5, I considered 'remembrance and resurrection,' devoting the first half of the chapter to the scantily analysed typescript of Burne-Jones's studio conversations with his assistant Thomas Rooke at the end of his career. A fresh consideration of this document shows his continued memory of his time at Oxford and use of theological language, even as he was making and describing art. The second half of the chapter considered two major projects for churches in the 1880s: mosaic designs for the American Church in Rome, St. Pauls-within-the-Walls, and *The Morning of Resurrection*, which began as an altarpiece for St. Peter's Vere Street, London, and was turned into a painting for exhibition. These large schemes show theological themes working together in the mind of Burne-Jones as he develops them in the architectural setting of churches. They reveal the continued development of his own theological ideas originally inspired by his earliest days of formation with the theology of John Henry Newman and the Tractarians.

Altogether, this thesis was shaped by theories and a method related to the 'theology of art'; structured by the argument that Burne-Jones articulated theological ideas in artistic media. The investigation of this 'theology of art' was necessarily grounded in the primary

⁷⁰⁶ Ruskin, *Art of England*, 40.

sources pertaining to Burne-Jones studies and life as student and then artist, and ultimately, theological thinker. Understanding how these sources, written and visual, could be ‘theological’ in nature required not only the historical context of secondary work but comparative and contextual analysis, especially in situating a statement or artwork within Burne-Jones’s wider artistic project.

With this information at hand, the ‘theology of art’ bore fruit when methods of close *looking* and interpretation of the *process* of artistic making took place. Artistic making could then be equated with artistic thinking, thereby bringing us closer to investigating theological thinking within visual media. In Burne-Jones’s case, the drafting and drawing process could trace out ideas and propositions he desired to make in his final project. Indeed, rather than cutting a clear path to iconographically *reading* religious ideas in a work of art, we discover propositions that Burne-Jones is putting forward; that he quite literally puts on the surfaces of his works for us to *see* and consider theologically. Once grounded in a solid background of historical context, much as Burne-Jones himself was grounded in actual theological ideas of his time, his potential ‘theology of art’ can be identified, emerging from his processes and unfolding creative acts of making and remaking. As a theory related to methods of making and artistic activity, the ‘theology of art’ can allow us to begin to recognise and propose a network of ideas taking place in the visual, so that the theology of the image can be *seen* (rather than read) *visually*. The ‘theology of art’ takes into account the necessary gap between textual and visual understanding; indeed, it is this gap that is theologically useful for Burne-Jones and potentially other artist to make statements on the mysterious and divine without actually ‘making statements’, as it were. Ultimately, the power of an artist’s particular ‘theology of art’ could rest in his or her use of this gap and their manipulation of the visual or physical medium itself; how it is phenomenologically experienced, as an artistic process of making and, for the audiences of past and present, as an active artistic process of viewing

(and potential remaking in the act of beholding). It is this approach to the ‘theology of art’ that I believe could be pertinent and useful, not simply for opening further discussion on interpreting Burne-Jones’s art as a ‘theology of art’, but also for doing so with other artists with different religious backgrounds and theological perspectives.

The Prioress’s Tale: ‘The Vision Has Not Changed’

It is especially in Burne-Jones’s last years, as he looks back upon his life and previous works, that we indeed see a recurrence and emphasis on these theological principles. *The Prioress’s Tale* begun for him as a personal piece, a painted wardrobe gifted to William and Jane Morris upon their wedding (Figure 4). Honouring their union in marriage, it is a bedroom altarpiece depicting the unfolding mystery of faith, resurrection, and redemption; Christ and salvation offered in the material of eucharistic wheat by his mother, who herself was the very material of his bodily incarnation. The story, as we discussed in Chapter 2, has unsettling antisemitic complications, and may raise questions as to Burne-Jones’s and Morris’s own views. It was a mysterious wedding present at first glance. Nevertheless, the theological implications unfurl as we more deeply understand Burne-Jones’ and Morris’ studies of Tractarian theological thought, and Burne-Jones’s own words on ‘the Highest of All Examples,’ and ‘the Marriage Supper of the Lamb’ in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* at the end of his studies and at the beginning of his artistic career.

As a painting at the end of his life, *The Prioress’s Tale* is a sentimental and yet powerful piece (Figure 81). In the picture, there is no ‘doubling’ of Mary, as there was in the wardrobe, no split scenes to portray narrative as it is in the architecture of *The Kelmscott Chaucer* (Figures 83-84). And yet, ‘the vision has not changed,’ Georgiana said. This may imply that Burne-Jones held and returned to views in which he continued to sympathise with the antisemitic tone of narrator of the story, Chaucer’s Prioress, especially in light of numerous caricatures Burne-Jones had made of ‘Good’ and ‘Bad’ Jews in the later decades

of his career. However, as Jacqueline Banerjee argues, these particular caricatures lack the context of relationships with Jewish neighbours from the beginning of his life that we discussed in Chapter 1, to Jewish artists and friends he mentored and supported, such as Simeon Solomon, as well as monumental funerary projects he worked on for Jewish patrons.⁷⁰⁷ Indeed, especially when we consider the tone of both the early cabinet and later painting in contrast to these caricatures, we see no explicit parody or reference to antisemitic sentiment. Instead, the seriousness of the theological principles we considered in the cabinet in Chapter 2 recur and develop in Burne-Jones's unchanged vision of a piece that is highly personal and reflect the Christian theological themes of the story and of his life.

At a time when Burne-Jones is wrestling to finish his vast painting of *The Last Sleep of Arthur in Avalon*, a sombre picture depicting mourning women and the king entering his deathly slumber (Figure 85), *The Prioress's Tale* as a painting revives not simply the darkness of eternal rest but the hope of resurrection for the soul embodied in the fervent child of faith. Surrounded by poppies, sunflowers, and roses, the bending Virgin Mary and the boy are set apart much as the Knight who bent for the kiss of Christ in the potent early painting of *The Merciful Knight* (Figure 14). The abundant flowers, which Burne-Jones says 'come at intervals like those in a tune' (humming as he pointed to one after the other): 'La la la la',⁷⁰⁸ create a garden of new life and song much as the boy in the tale is brought to new life and to sing again a new song of 'Alma Redemptoris'. Lifted up before the city which had persecuted the boy, they are at once secure from the world beyond and open to the viewer before them; the gate at the very forefront of the picture opens to allow entry up to the steps and the garden inside. The Virgin Mary, resplendent in her blue cloak, clutches the wheat in one hand, and in the gesture of communion, places a single piece within the boy's mouth. Risen from the

⁷⁰⁷ Jacqueline Banerjee, 'Caricature – Lines of Heads: Burne-Jones and Anti-Semitism,' *The Victorian Web*, accessed 21 October 2020, <http://www.victorianweb.org/painting/bj/drawings/71.html>.

⁷⁰⁸ *Memorials*, 2:333.

grave he appears as the faithful receiving that communion, with his eyes closed, his lips pursed, and his hands folded in prayer. Where death is suspended at the threshold, beyond the bed and curtain in *The Sleep of Arthur in Avalon*, Burne-Jones in this painting is looking back upon his early work, its theme of hope and bodily resurrection and new life, and presents a vision ‘unchanged’ from the early cabinet and yet deepened by the theological implications of the very real prospect of Burne-Jones’s own approaching death. In dialogue with the uncertainty and mystery of eternal sleep, he also presents the Christian certainty of resurrection made evident in Christ’s own physical life, his death, and in his sacramental presence as the ‘food’ for the faithful and in the art he creates.

Looking more deeply at his background in theology opens the door for further investigation to works religious and mythical, since, as Ruskin said, much of Burne-Jones’s unique skill is ‘harmonizing’ all subjects with the ‘loveliest traditions of the Christian legend.’⁷⁰⁹ Although I have been limited to a few selections here, I believe that this research and analysis will allow scholars and viewers new ways to understand and engage with his expansive corpus, across his themes, mediums, and projects. Burne-Jones is not simply a religious painter designing Christian subjects or mythical subjects; he is deeply intellectual and draws from his formation as a theologian and his creative powers as an artist to make an art that functions itself as a ‘theology of art’. Conveying the relationships between real and ideal, earth and heaven, Burne-Jones’s art enters into the ‘one splendid venture’ Newman set him on, expressing in a distinctly theological, unique, and profound way art’s ability to engage the exchange of ‘love between worlds’.⁷¹⁰

⁷⁰⁹ See Chapter 4, ‘Implications for a “Mythic Art”’.

⁷¹⁰ *Memorials*, 1:59.

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