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MILLAIS' MODERN CHRIST: RELIGION AND CRITICAL RESPONSES TO THE PRE-RAPHAELITE BROTHERHOOD IN NINETEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores how the press reviewed Pre-Raphaelite paintings in the years 1849 and 1850 with a partial review of 1851. In particular, the focus is on the controversial painting *Christ in the House of his Parents* by John Everett Millais. This painting became a physical symbol of the many fears that the new modern age brought to Victorian England. Catholic, Irish, and Protestant tensions had been mounting throughout the nineteenth century in England prior to the debut of the painting. Politics and law were beginning to relax restraints on Catholicism in addition to the increased immigration of Irish Catholics. The public appearance of Catholic biblical figures began to threaten Protestantism during a time when biblical representation was also under question in the art world. As the press became more accessible and widely read, media began to influence and be influenced by the public opinion. The sensational printed press reviews of Millais's painting shed light on the tumultuous relationship that Victorian culture had with progress, religious life, and Catholicism. As society changed, Victorian religious life had to adapt, and this created a tumultuous relationship that has led to a polarized historiography of Victorian religious history.

Victorian England is said to have been either staunchly and rigidly religious or to have been overwhelmed with what historians have labeled the "Crisis of Doubt." Past scholarship has used outdated theories on secularization, assuming the more modern a society becomes, the less important religion becomes in that society. Intellectual Victorian writings and statistical records have led to the conclusion that the new modern age of technology, science, and nature began a major shift away from religion. On the other hand, popular novels and societal norms tell that the Victorian people were deeply religious, particularly Protestants. Rather than assume one or the other, this thesis explores the incongruities represented in the printed reviews of Millais's

painting of the Holy Family. By analyzing the popular printed press's reactions to religious themed artwork, it is possible to open a window into the religious discomfort of the age rather than paint a black and white picture of Victorian faith.

INDEX WORDS: Victorian Studies, Pre-Raphaelite, John Everett Millais, Nineteenth-century England, Religion, Victorian Press

TO MY GRANDMOTHER JENNY KING MEADOWS

Not a day goes by that you are not missed. I wish you had been able to see this project completed.

I know you would have called the entire family to brag. We love you always.

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INTRODUCTION:

John Everett Millais (1829 – 1896) was a prodigious young student at the British Royal Academy of Arts. In 1850, he entered a painting of young Jesus in the carpentry shop, entitled *Christ in the House of his Parents* (and regularly referred to in this thesis as just *Christ*), at the annual exhibition of art. *Christ* potrayed an intimate moment between a young Jesus and his Mother Mary inside Joseph's bustling working Carpentry shop. The scene looks as though it caputred a real moment in time, with real people, in a real shop. Millais's artistic choices in *Christ* would forever shape his reputation. He had already won several prizes for his artwork at the Academy and was a promising talent. Despite his prodigious reputation, the painting of young Christ became one of the most abhorred pieces of the 1850 Royal Academy of Arts exhibition. Reviews of his painting were hysterical and, at times, vicious. Just the year prior, Millais received minor constructive criticism for his painting of Isabella and Lorenzo from Boccaccio's *Decameron* (1348 – 1853). The style and aesthetic in which he painted both were the same and adorned with the initials P.R.B. The commentaries seemed to describe a youthfull rebeliousness. The review authors only warned the young artist, and the periodical readers, on the dangers of following new trends rather than paitning in the style taught by the Academy. The Pre-Ralphaelite Brotherhood (PRB), of which Millais was a leader, challenged prevailing artistic standards in the Victorian era by harkening back to medieval styles of painting, focusing on emotion over physiological and mechanical accuracy, as well as vibrant color and classical poses.

Figure 1: Sir John Everett Millais*, Christ in the House of His Parents*, 1849.

However, the anonymous press described his painting of young Jesus and his family as blasphemous, ugly, and an abomination to high art. Only one year apart, the young artist had fallen from a prodigy status to one of the most infamous artists of the Victorian age. Every detail about Millais's painting of the Holy family represented a public fear expressed in many sensational reviews in print media. Victorian modernity was colored by secular culture, religious toleration of Catholics, industrial and scientific progress, shifting class wealth, and many other factors; all threatened the Victorian conservative sensibility. In most modern imaginations, nineteenth-century England was a period of religious fervor and strict moral codes. To others, it was full of scientific discoveries (cast as inherently anti-religious) that shook society's beliefs.[1] Yet, this dialectic between religious and secular was never clear cut and the story of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood allows us to examine the ways that religion and secularization collided, that

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[1] I will be focusing on the supposed secular element of modernization theory in this paper. As such, the following texts offer a range of historiographical information on Secularization theory. William H. Swatos Jr. and Kevin J. Christiano, "Secularization Theory: The Course of a Concept," *Sociology of Religion* 60, no. 3, 1999, 209 – 228. Jeffrey K. Hadden, "Toward Desacralizing Secularization Theory," *Social Forces* 65, no. 3, 1987, 587 – 611. Philip S. Gorski and Ateş Altınordu, "After Secularization?," *Annual Review of Sociology* 34, 2008, 55 – 85.

modernity, as far as such a concept exists or existed, was the byproduct of debates over religion in places where religion was not strictly enforced – namely the art world and those outlets that published art critiques. It is worth noting that this research is intended to serve as a micro-historical study of mid-century Victorian culture, one that straddles both religious and art history without fully belonging to either. It explores multiple concepts related to modernity, secularization, religion, culture, and class in this era through the perceptions of early Pre-Raphaelite painting.

Generally, secularization theory implies that as civilizations modernize, religion becomes privatized, corded off from primarily the political realm. Historians of modern Europe have mostly defended this position by looking into quantitive data based on sources as wide ranging as church attendence records to wills. This may lead some to believe that religion was no longer necessary in daily life.[2] This statistical data was often coupled with intellectual literature that further proved Victorian secularization theories.[3] Marxist historians like Eric Hobsbawmhave contended that "frank Christianity" became a rarity for male scholars, writers, and intellectuals, as the mercantile elite emerged from the bourgeois middle class. The 1789 French Revoution entrenched the secular values of the middle class in the realm of politics.[4] Other scholars have looked at popular Victorian novels and stories. Many themes within these Victorian publications often included a loss of faith, conversion, or moral dilemmas.[5] These approaches limit the full exploration of the nineteenth-century struggle with faith. Looking at the Victorian faith in growth or decline ignores the possibility that changing societies can accommodate religion. Marcel Gauchet stated that religion

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[2] For example: Michael M. Clarke, "Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, Mid-Victorian Anti-Catholicism, and the Turn to Secularism," *ELH* 78 no. 4, 2011, 967 – 989. See also Michel Vovelle, *Piété baroque et déchristianisation en Provence au dix-huitième siècle: les attitudes devant la mort d'après les clauses des testaments* (Paris: Plon, 1973).

[3] Michael M. Clarke, "Charlotte Brontë's *Villette,*" 967 – 989.

[4] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: Europe 1789 – 1848* (Great Britain: Clay's ltd, St. Ives plc, 1977), 266 – 269.

[5] Miriam Elizabeth Burstein, *Victorian Reformations, Historical Fiction and Religious Controversy, 1820 – 1900* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), 1 – 5.

does not entirely disappear from society but changes its function to accommodate modernizing societies.[6] By looking at other aspects of Victorian culture, it is possible to get a glimpse into that complicated relationship. This research explores the impacts of modernization and religious fervor, particularly Protestantism, in the press reviews of high art. A controversial group of young artists known as the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood sought progress in the British schools of art they perceived as outdated and stale.[7] This research will explore how the public's reactions to the Brotherhood's new and progressive methods of painting religious subjects represented a calibration of temporal and spiritual aspects of Victorian society, not the death of faith.

This work is not the first to challenge the secular narrative of modernity in nineteenth-century Britain. Historians such as Timothy Larsen, David Nash, and Michael Rectenwald have examined the so-called Victorian "crisis of faith" by focusing on themes related to historicity, archeology, and geology. Rather than focusing on the idea that religion was in decline, Timothy Larsen put forth the "crisis of doubt." Larsen considered more components of Victorian life by including the scholarly writings of atheists and dissenters that later turned to Christianity. Larsen included narratives of those that denounced their faith but later joined a different sect of Christianity to show how religion regained dissenters. Rectenwald built on Nash's investigation and navigated between the "crisis of faith" and the "crisis of doubt" narratives without leaving either behind.[8]

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[6] Marcel Gauchet, *The Disenchantment of the World: A Political History of Religion,* trans. Oscar Burge (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999).

[7] From this point on, I will refer to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood as just the Brotherhood.

[8] Timothy Larsen, *Contested Christianity: The Political and Social Contexts of Victorian Theology* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2004); David Nash, "Reassessing the 'Crisis of Faith' in the Victorian Age: Eclecticism and the Spirit of Moral Inquiry," *Journal of Victorian Culture* 16, no. 1, 2011, 65 – 82.; Michael Rectenwald, *Nineteenth-Century British Secularism, Science, Religion, and Literature,* Histories of the Sacred and Secular 1700 – 2000 (New York: Palgrave and MacMillan, 2016).

The controversial painting by John Everett Millais, *Christ in the House of His Parents*, represented these threats to the Victorian way of life for his critics, particularly those morals and values firmly rooted in Protestantism.[9] The painting represented a radical attack against Protestant society. Pre-Raphael also meant pre-Protestant Reformation.[10] The local press reviews of the painting defended Protestantism at a time when Catholicism was increasingly tolerated in English circles. This can lead to the conclusion that mid-century Victorian life was still influenced primarily by religion despite modern changes. However, the painting was also a catalyst for secular change in the art world. Brotherhood members, such as William Holman Hunt (1827 – 1910), had a lasting influence on the future artistic representations of biblical scenes and figures. Their paintings inspired by the Holy Family and Bible would later become well-loved and popular despite the previous backlash received in the 1850s. The contradictory reactions to the Brotherhood tell the complicated story of Victorian religion. Instead of representing either "backwards" religious or "progressive" secular trends, the reactions to the Brotherhood art represent the complicated relationship between the two. The secular and religious faith both shaped the Victorian age.

Michaela Giebelhausen explored the Victorian art world to uncover new developments in how the age shaped the pictorial representations of biblical subjects. Her research sheds light on the popularity and decline of religious subjects in nineteenth-century British painting. She charted the shifts that led to a natural rather than ideological form of painting.[11] The relevance of high art

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[9] This painting is also known as *The Carpenters Shop*, from here the painting will be referred to as *Christ*.

[10] Raphael, or Raffaello Santi, (1483 – 1520) was a master painter and architect during the Italian High Renaissance. He is celebrated for clarity of form and composition and his achievements in visualizing the Neoplatonic ideals of human forms. Possibly one of the most famous works by Raphael is the *School of Athens* located in the *Stanza della Segnetura* in the Vatican. Sir Joshua Reynolds grounded his artistic education and teachings on the idealized perfection that Raphael achieved during his time.

[11] Michaela Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible: Representation and Belief in Mid-Victorian Britain* (New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2016), 1 – 5.

was in question as early as the 1840s. History painting was the most significant genre in the high art hierarchy in the first half of the century; mythological stories, historical events, and biblical scenes made up this genre and were used to teach and reinforce morals. According to Giebelhausen, the changes in religious painting, those enabled by the Brotherhood in the early half and mid-century, led to a redefinition of biblical representation. Giebelhausen's research begins and ends with the changes in pictorial representations of biblical art as it pertains to art historical studies.

Where Giebelhausen's research ends, mine picks up. This research delves deeper into the Victorian public's reactions to how the Brotherhood attempted to change the modes and methods of idealized academic painting. Without glossing over modern secularization or the persistence of Protestant faith and individual faith, I explore new ways of looking at the Victorian era through art reviews. I propose that the Brotherhood challenged the art world and led a lagging Victorian culture into the modern and increasingly secular world. Simultaneously, the Brotherhood renewed a dramatic defense of the Protestant faith. This research demonstrates a conjoined type of relationship between modern secularization and the persistence of faith. The Brotherhood's art represented the effects of progress and modernity on the increasing degradation of Victorian Protestantism. This limits the Brotherhood's progressive modes of painting to a steppingstone, for the future of art progress. Giebelhausen demonstrated that the initial products of the Brotherhood were a phase into innovations for religious representation. Other modern-day historians believe them to be the foundations for *avant-garde* art.[12] This theory does not deny the early Brotherhood's importance to Victorian culture and art in the mid-century. Still, it understates the importance of those first few religious works, especially Millais's *Christ*, on Victorian religiosity.

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[12] Dennis Denisoff, "Decadence and Aestheticism," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Fin De Siècle,* ed. Gail Marshal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 35 – 36.

Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart suggested a theory based on security and survival in different nations. They contested that the more secure the country's average person is, the less they rely on religion or spiritual beliefs to fill a security void.[13] This idea put forth by Norris and Inglehart is used on the smaller scale of Victorian society. In doing so, the reviews of the Brotherhood's paintings are described as evidence that religion was still vital to Victorians. Secularization and faith become components of the perceived threats to Protestant life to mid-century Victorians when placed within the age's historical context. The reversal of many Reformation laws, progress in the many sciences, biblical criticisms, and general shifts in traditional art production methods that took place in the beginning and middle of the century produced a "crisis of faith" and "doubt." These crises generated a void in the emotional and spiritual wellbeing of the Victorian person. The severe attacks on the Brotherhood member Millais represent the security void that fueled a dramatic defense of religious pictorial representations.

To better understand the public reactions to the Brotherhood and their paintings, our sources include periodical reviews predominately from the printed press in London with a few outliers from surrounding areas in England and Edinburgh. Chapter one of this research delves into the surrounding cultural, social, and religious factors surrounding early to mid-Victorian life. One factor it demonstrates in more detail is how Victorian criticism played a central role in shaping the thoughts and ideas towards art and other cultural aspects of daily life. The growing print industry strongly determined the reaction to public taste in art, creating art, and was subsequently shaped by public opinion.[14] Wendy Graham believes that debates surrounding the Brotherhood and Millais's *Christ* would have been limited to social spheres made up of intellectuals, artists,

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[13] Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *The Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[14] Wendy Graham, *Critics, Coteries, and Pre-Raphaelite Celebrity* (New York: Columbus University Press, 2017), Introduction, xiii.

and poets. The innovations and improvements of print technology, circulation, and availability brought discussions such as art and literature to a broader public that may not have had access before.[15] Chapter two shows the first public reactions to the Brotherhood's artworks. The Brotherhood members began exhibiting their new style in 1849 at an art exhibition in Hyde Park and a few months later at the Royal Academy. Rossetti, Hunt, Millais, and associate but not Brotherhood member Ford Maddox Brown (1828 – 93) all presented works with "medieval" qualities that the press described as "early Florentine" and "antiquated."[16] All the paintings, except one by Rossetti, were History paintings of scenes from plays and stories. Rossetti was the only one to submit a biblical subject of the Virgin Mary. The periodical reviews' criticisms were mild and focused primarily on the artists' obsessions with antiquated art. The anonymous reviewers commented primarily on artistic techniques such as color, shades, figures' flatness, and composition. Although History painting was the most respected genre in the hierarchy of fine art, imperfectly rendering mythological and historical figures were not nearly as controversial as the members' biblical subjects. It was a rebellious move for the young men to use the highest and most respected art genre as their stage for change. By also entering the biblical genre of art production, the Brotherhood shook the art world to its core and, subsequently, the religious world.

Chapter three focuses on the 1850 periodical reviews of Millais's painting *Christ in the House of His Parents*. Specific comments in the various reviews correspond to social, religious, and cultural problems becoming more prominent and evident in mid-Victorian society. Many of these issues were rooted in religion. The Catholic and Irish problems spurred an extreme defense

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[15] Graham, *Critics, Coteries, and Pre-Raphaelite Celebrity,* 13.

[16] Medieval will be used in quotations when describing the Brotherhood's artworks since it was not true medieval qualities that the artists emulated. It is explained in a previous footnote that the Victorian art critics understanding of Medieval was early Renaissance art and other time periods associated with early Christian art. Therefore, I chose to present the word in quotations to reflect the Victorian use of the word in these instances.

of Protestantism. The fast-changing world associated with modernization and advancements in technology, sciences, and Biblical criticisms exacerbated the Catholic-Irish problem. This chapter utilizes Norris and Inglehart's theory on secularization. When the Brotherhood chose to go against the normalized methods of painting historical and Biblical subjects, an uneasiness began to surface in the form of general periodical art reviews. Anti-Catholic rhetoric resurfaced, growing concern with Irish-British relations mounted, and Protestant security became threatened. This existential insecurity led to a temporary extreme resurgence in a public show of Protestant religiosity in the mid-Victorian culture. Since art, culture, society, and class structure were all considered relative to one another and representative of one another, the perceived degradation of Reynold's art doctrine was also considered a degradation of Protestant morals and values.[17] The Secular theory would interpret this to be a consequence of modernization in the shadow of the Age of Enlightenment. In doing so, it would not be possible to consider *Christ* and the public reaction to it as a religious resurgence, even if short-lived. Yet, when we consider less restrictive and more recent theories on secularization, we can see that, as Gauchet suggested, religion and faith did not disappear from Victorian society. Still, instead, it changed and shifted its function and purpose to suit changing ways of life. Whether it be in the form of public defense of Protestantism, pro or anti-Catholicism, the popularity of religious artwork, or the decline of church attendance, it is evident that the Victorian relationship with religion is more than just a black and white picture of empty church pews.

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[17] Charles Dickens (1812 – 1870) was a well renowned novelist, journalist, editor, illustrator, and overall socialite. He is most well-known for his novels and short stories such as *A Christmas Carol.* As a young boy Dickens and his family grew up relatively poor and his father went to prison for debts. At the age of twelve, Dickens worked to support his family. His experience is believed to explain his realistic representations of lower British life and the poor. Charles Dickens was one of the many writers and socialites that were influential at their time as social and cultural commenters.

This research will focus on the available reviews across British magazines and newspapers between the years 1849 and 1851 about, but not limited to, John Everett Millais's *Christ.* A handful of the reviews were selected from a comprised bibliography by Thomas J. Tobin. *The Examiner* (Greater London, 1808-1881), *The Times* (Greater London, 1785-1921), and *The Morning Chronicle* (Greater London, 1801-1865) are just three of the print papers used. Millais's painting is being used as the primary artwork to examine reviews because of the intense print criticism it received, what the Pre-Raphaelite W. M. Rossetti called "a perfect crusade against the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood."[18] The criticisms commented on various aspects of what critics believed the painting stood for or represented for society. At its creation and exhibition, the painting represented the uneasy relationship between the Victorian elite and secular modernity and their evolving Christian values and practices.[19]

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and the Royal Academy

In 1848, two young men named William Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais worked together in artists' studios while studying at the Royal Academy of Arts (1768 -).[20] According to stories and later biographies, these late-night painting and sketching sessions often led to deep discussions on the current state of the art world and criticism towards the traditional methods of teaching art. These two young students thought these traditional methods to be outdated and stale.

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[18] Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible,* 109.

[19] Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible,* 88.

[20] There were different phases of the pre-Raphaelite brotherhood that were a bit different from one another. The original four men Hunt, Millais, D. G. Rossetti, and W. M. Rossetti were the founders of the original brotherhood. This original group focused primarily on the concept of truth to nature and sought to create images that included the imperfect. This ideal was short lived, and several of the artists such as Millais abandoned the Medieval quality of these works and continued to create less abrasive, but still progressive artworks that would become well known. Other young artists that admired the original four members and their ideals continued in different factions with progressive ideas that would later form a different Pre-Raphaelite idea spearheaded by men such as William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones. This research deals only with the original group and ideals of the founding Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the years 1848-1851.

The artistic techniques taught at the Royal Academy were still heavily based on the lectures and teachings of Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723 – 92), one of the founders and the first president of the Royal Academy.[21] A great artist in his day, his *Discourses* on painting and art were considered canon for any English art student or aspiring artists. He promoted the Grand Manner of painting that took root in Classicism and High Renaissance art. The primary takeaway from the Grand Manner was that it advocated for the idealization of nature and subjects. Reynolds believed that Raphael was one of the finest examples of creating the imperfect world's ideal image. The Grand Manner taught that heroic, noble, and biblical subjects should always be rendered in an ideal and perfect form and never shown with deformities or ugliness, regardless of how it looked in real life. If a deformity or ailment was shown in an image, it was nobilified and presented in an honorable and aesthetically pleasing way.

The Grand Manner was what the Brotherhood members rebuked in their artworks under the guise "P.R.B." Hunt, Millais, and fellow young artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828 – 82) met to establish a progressive and innovative move forward in art. These men looked back at early and pre-Renaissance, pre-Protestant-era art for inspiration.[22] The art that pre-dated the great Raphael seemed, to these men, more sincere. The artwork represented an artist's labor of love and devotion to faith. The Brotherhood sought to redefine Victorian definitions of "traditional," "Medieval,"

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[21] Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723 – 1792) promoted the "Grand Style of Painting", more commonly known now as the Grand Manner, that promoted the idealization of the imperfect in nature. He was one of the major painters of his time and influenced the teaching and understanding of British art for decades after his death. He primarily focused on portraiture painting and helped to elevate it to the level of history painting in the hierarchy of art genres that he himself promoted and reiterated. Sir Joshua Reynolds became the first president of the Royal Academy of Arts in 1768 and held the position until his death. He is most famous for his lasting influence of the *Discourses* on art that were published from 1769 to 1790. These *Discourses* were considered textbooks for new artists in the Royal Academy. Reynolds helped turn the Royal Academy of Arts into a National identity that brought the English artist into the world of culture that could rival that of France and Italy.

[22] Medieval art was not well known during this time. "Medieval" was a term used to described anything that predated Titian, Raphael, and Michelangelo. What was considered Medieval is now considered early Renaissance art. Paul Barlow, *Time Present and Time Past: The Art of John Everett Millais,* British Art and Visual Culture Since 1750 New Readings (New York: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), 9 – 10.

and "Classicism." The men wanted to create dynamic and exciting art that transgressed the stale Reynoldian canons.[23] The men's Proto-Renaissance vision inspired the name they collectively chose to identify themselves. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood implied that they were a group of individuals, as opposed to one artist, influenced by the works predating the great master, Raphael. The name the men chose unquestionably established themselves as the anti-thesis of Reynolds teachings and the Academy of Arts.

The Royal Academy of England was a critical factor in determining "high art" and "low art" in Victorian culture. The Academy and its academicians helped to shape the culture within English society. The establishment reiterated the values and morals that the ideal Britain's sought to demonstrate. In addition to making art available for view, primarily for the wealthy, the Academy wanted to celebrate English artists and promote an "English style" that could rival the French or Italian schools. Prior to the establishment of a British art school, English art was described by an 1862 history of the Royal Academy of Arts as lacking and inferior to established art schools such as in Italy and France. British artists of true talent were believed to have been overshadowed by Italy and France's great "foreign" painters in the early and middle eighteenth-century.[24]

Early forms of groups of English artists existed with Sir James Thornhill (1675-1734).[25] The government and treasury initially rejected Thornhill's idea for an English school of art. Determined, Thornhill began a school of drawing in his own home until his death, after which a painter only mentioned by the name Mr. Hyde took over instruction.[26] In addition to the Thornhill

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[23] Graham, *Critics and Coteries and Pre-Raphaelite Celebrity,* 1 – 2.
[24] William Sandby, *The History of the Royal Academy of Arts From its Foundation in 1768 to the Present Time.* vol 1, 1 – 16.
[25] Sir Thornhill was a History painter that worked primarily in the Italian Baroque method. Notable works include the painted hall at the Royal Hospital in Greenwich and the inside of St. Paul's Cathedral.
[26] Sandby, *The History of the Royal Academy of Arts,* 21.

school, William Hogarth championed artists' success, which later led to the founding of the Society of Artists of Great Britain (1760 – 91).[27] Finally, with persuasion, the Academy was established in 1768 by the government's architect Sir William Chambers (1723 – 96) and the painter Sir Joshua Reynolds who became the first president.[28] Reynolds' Royal Academy admired and taught traditional art that mirrored and upheld the classical world of art. With these qualities, teachers and academicians believed they could raise English artists to a status equal or better than France and Italy's great artists. The Academy became a way to define what it meant to be a cultured Englishman with taste. Anything outside of these ideals was described as ugly, distasteful, and sometimes even accused of blasphemy. Reynold's ideas of art and the Academy became the anti-thesis of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

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[27] The Society of Artists of Great Britain was a group of artists that included sculptors, engravers, and architects. The organization was successful and held many different exhibitions of artwork throughout its lifetime. Notable members of the group include Francis Hayman, William Chambers, and Sir Joshua Reynolds. By the late 1760s the organization faced problems regarding the electoral process and the foundation of the Royal Academy of Arts. Approximately a decade later the organization faced financial turmoil and was forced to sell its exhibition space. The last exhibition held by its remaining members took place in 1791. Matthew Hargraves, "Society of Artists of Great Britain," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* Online May 24, 2007, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/96318.

[28] Sir Chambers was a well-known architect known for his Palladian-style. He was the architectural student for King George III and was a successful official architect. A notable work includes the Somerset house.

CHAPTER 1: CONTEXTUALIZING THE PRE-RAPHAELITE BROTHERHOOD IN A NEW AGE

By the time the Brotherhood sparked controversy, questions of faith and Christianity's role in the present and future of daily life already riddled the Victorian age. Biblical criticism grew in popularity as foreign translations became more popular and widely available. Historical accuracy was under question pertaining to the Bible and in methods of creating art. Well-known intellectuals, academicians, philosophers, and writers were denouncing the Christian faith and turning towards alternate belief systems. As it would seem, secularism was underway in a post-enlightenment age that was also quickly industrializing and modernizing. London's industrialization allowed a second class of people to arise between the destitute poor and the aristocratic elite. Business and entrepreneurship built up a middle-class Victorian society that was neither low-class poor nor earned status equal to any aristocracy. Wendy Graham described the Pre-Raphaelite movement as middle-class art for a burgeoning middle-class and an attack on art status in an elite society.[29] It is evident in this research that their artistic views were a threat to the one area of Victorian elite life that seemed safe from the modernizing world and all the good and harmful repercussions.

Biblical criticism and historical accuracy had long been topics in intellectual spheres for decades before the Brotherhood. However, until the mid-nineteenth century, the Royal Academy's art in England was thought to be free of such discussions. The Royal Academy was the safe house for elite Victorian culture. Henry Howard expressed that the role of the Royal Academy was to promote the highest aims, secure true principles against the fluctuations and temporary invasions of fashion and fad. The Royal academy was meant to preserve artistic ideals for a propitious era.[30]

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[29] Graham, *Critics and Coteries, and Pre-Raphaelite Celebrity*, 2 – 5.
[30] Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible*, 24.

For example, art, religion, morals, values, and etiquette were considered safe within the culture that the Royal Academy promoted and the art that it showcased and housed. Victorian culture was dominated by Classical educations. Upper- and middle-class education was centered on Latin and Ancient Greek thought, poetry, history, art, and style. Artistic and architectural styles were based on the Roman writer Vitruvius and his ideal form. These classical principles dominated in the Royal Academy of Arts as well. Successful artists that departed from these academic styles such as John Constable and William Turner were still trained in these classical principles as well as Millais and Hunt.[31] The well-known painter and first President of the Academy, Sir Joshua Reynolds, had established a foundation of teaching based on the Classical Masters of Greece and Rome.[32] The Brotherhood members Millais and Hunt sought to dismantle the Reynoldian hold on the Royal Academy and hoped that they could bring fresh new ideas to the art world. With the establishment of their small group of men called the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, they made their stance on the current condition of Reynoldian teaching quite clear. Religious doubt and crises had been building up since the beginning of the century as more intellectuals and gentlemen of the sciences published works. When the Brotherhood made their appearance, the questions of faith and doubt led to a public response towards their artwork that seems overreactive, especially when

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[31] Sir Richard J. Evans FBA, "The Victorians: Art and Culture" (Lecture, Gresham College, Museum of London, Monday 4 October 2010, 6:00 PM).

[32] The Royal Academy of Arts was not necessarily an ideology-free zone. It promoted the Grand Manner of painting that modeled after Italian High Renaissance art and Classical Greek and Roman ruins. The rise of Classical tradition in art was possibly influenced by the previous Rococo, Baroque, and Romanticism movements in art in the early and mid-18th century. Classical traditions, in the eyes of the Victorians, represented a grand and glory, although idealized. Northern Renaissance art found in Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and other Low Countries tended to retain Gothic elements with darker and more somber moods. Historically, from the time of Rome and beyond, the Low countries and Germanic territories were considered Barbaric, uncultured, uneducated, etc. For the Brotherhood to focus on art that was styled after pre-Raphaelite art, Northern Renaissance artists, and Gothic/Medieval elements was to reject culture, refinement, civilization, and all other things that made a great modern civilization. The Royal Academy of Arts promoted the grand style and upheld the greatness of an idealized Rome and Greece. The art and architecture represented cultural greatness and cultural refinement. The Academy housed these artworks and ideals and stood as an important representative to the greatness of English culture. Please see Colin Trodd, "The Authority of Art: Culture Criticism and the idea of the Royal Academy in mid-Victorian Britain," *Art History* 20 no. 1, 1997, 3 – 22.

the Victorian culture had seemingly become more secular and modern. This chapter will focus on the historical context of the age. The events that took place shaped and were shaped by the reactions to the Brotherhood and their works. The following pages will give a brief overview of the history of biblical criticism and how it was generally accepted by or affected the Victorian belief system. This will tie into the long history of British relations with Catholicism and Ireland that led to mounting tensions in the nineteenth century. Also highlighted in this chapter are the roles of the Royal Academy Exhibitions, the growing availability of printed press, and the budding popularity of sensational press reviews. The Royal Academy and the printed press. Both were essential elements to the spread and influence of Victorian culture and were also simultaneously affected by the tensions of the age. All these different factors aided in the general responses to the Brotherhood and help to shed light on why Millais's painting is a physical representation of the fear and doubt that manifested in the century.

The State of Religious Affairs

By determining London's secularity only from the popular writings of the educated and elite, the Victorian age is limited to this belief that these writings prove a secular Victorian culture.[33] Rectenwald argued for a new framework in which the secular is a *condition* of secularity. Secularization that accompanies modernity is conditional upon its environmental context, and Victorian England is very much a contextual environment. Rectenwald wrote that to presume that science naturally unsettles faith and belief is to give it an active agency that it does not necessarily have.[34] Rectenwald considered that the Copernican Revolution did not eradicate Christianity.[35]

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[33] Michael Rectenwald, *Nineteenth-Century British Secularism, Science, Religion, and Literature*, Histories of the Sacred and Secular 1700 – 2000 (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 1 – 5.

[34] Rectenwald, *Nineteenth-Century British Secularism,* 16 – 17.

[35] The Copernican Revolution is the shift from thinking that the Earth was the center of the Universe to the heliocentric model.

Instead, Christianity embraced and accommodated it. He also believed that Darwin's *Origins of Species* was not the catalyst for the development of a new progressive secular thought. Many have deemed it to be since similar discussions had already been in place before its publication.[36] Without doubt and argument, Christianity, faith, the Bible, and the historicity of those elements were under question. However, it is arguable that the overwhelming secular thought did not necessarily create a staunchly secular age. The growing amount of information created a space of insecurity in Victorian faith.

The work of the likes of Darwin and Millais were influenced by predecessors; the 1850s was not the beginning of this shift in British history. Primary examples include Charles Hennell's *An Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity* (1838) and Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830 – 38).[37] German biblical Criticism, archeology, and geology brought forth contradictory evidence that refuted biblical stories. Western Christianity had long been divided, contested, and under scrutiny before the age of Queen Victoria. Michael Legaspi contends that biblical scripture perished in Western Christendom in the sixteenth century with the Reformation and later intensified with the rise of biblical scholarship only a couple of hundred years later.[38] Both Catholics and Protestants claimed the Bible, but each gave it different meanings and purposes. As time progressed, different versions and translations were disseminated and used as authoritative texts in various ways. With two different Christian ideas that used the Bible in different ways, the once singular sacred text seemed more like a simple book. The Bible lost its foremost authority

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[36] Rectenwald, *Nineteenth-Century British Secularism,* 10.

[37] Charles Christian Hennell. *An Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity*, Original print 1838, Part of the Cambridge Library Collection (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2010). Charles Hennell studied the New Testament and determined that Christianity was just another part of human history and the Bible should be considered a historical text. Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geography,* 1830 – 1838. This publication presented the idea of Uniformitarianism which states that the same laws that operate our present-day earth and science have always been in the universe and can be applied universally.

[38] Rectenwald, *Nineteenth-Century British Secularism,* 3.

once held under Catholic supremacy and lost some of its transcendental value subject to criticism and investigation.[39] Historians such as Richard Popkin and Legaspi believe that the many years following the division of Christianity after the Reformation led to a dichotomy of intense defense of traditional belief and, on the other hand, an equally strong criticism.[40]

By the mid-nineteenth century, leisurely classes and intellectuals were translating, reading, and discussing foreign (mainly German) academic manuscripts. Britain's growing political power allowed for an interest in indigenous writings, and the age presented a new interest in translation that was not limited to Classical texts. Growing colonial power and new wealth that came with an industrialized nation led to an age of travel. Interest in other cultures and languages amongst the leisured classes grew. This new fascination with foreign culture extended to language and led to the translations of more texts. Interests extended to other European nations such as Germany, which had not been as popular a language to learn formally until the 1840s.[41] Journals and periodicals published excerpts and short translations of popular or controversial foreign texts. German rational theology and Historical criticism became known by the early nineteenth century in Britain. Well-known intellectuals such as Thomas Carlyle (1795 – 1881) were reading and writing about it.[42] Charles Taylor described the phenomena of secularity and religion in a way that sums up the Victorian experience well:

> The salient feature of the modern cosmic imaginary is not that it fostered materialism or enabled people to return as it were to religion, though it has done both things. But the most important fact about it which is relevant to our enquiry

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[39] Rectenwald, *Nineteenth-Century British Secularism*, 3 – 5.

[40] Rectenwald, *Nineteenth-Century British Secularism,* 3.

[41] The first permanent teachers of French and German were appointed in Oxford in 1840 under the Taylorian institute. David Lincicum, "Fighting Germans with Germans: Victorian Theological Translations between Anxiety and Influence," *Journal for the History of Modern Theology* 24 no. 2, 1994, 154 – 156.

[42] British historian, satirical writer, mathematician, teacher, intellectual. Known for his "Hero-Worship" and that history of the world is the biography of great men. Carlyle later converted to a form of deism at the University of Edinburgh.

> here is that it has opened a space in which people can wander between and around all these options without having to land clearly and definitively in any one.[43]

Taylor states that space was created for people to safely move from the secular to religious without settling "definitively in any one" was precisely what created a Victorian culture crisis. Faith, religion, culture, societal morals, and values were all based on long-held Protestant and/or Catholic foundations. Yet, it was possible to believe in ideas that were not fundamentally Christian such as geological evidence, biblical studies, problems with historical accuracy in the Bible and art and literature, and the other intellectual factors of the age in technology and science. The fact that one could navigate between the secular and the religious created an existential crisis that led to what Taylor said, "fostered materialism" or "enabled people to return as it were to religion." As Rectenwald put it, "…this *wandering* in the early nineteenth century – from religious faith to skepticism, to materialism, to 'natural supernaturalism,' to 'rational Christianity'" were all points at which one could stop on a journey of faith. These scholarly writings shook fundamental religious beliefs about history, theology, and research. Similar arguments also permeated the Victorian visual and literary culture. British high art and the British Royal Academy of Arts social circles also included discourses on painting historical accuracy, Biblical and Holy figures, and art's future progress.

The Royal Academy and the Grand Manner: Protector of High Art and Victorian Culture

In the mid-seventeenth century, the English art world was lacking professionalism and British identity. The Academy of Arts in London and its academicians helped shape the high culture within English society and reiterate the values and morals that the Victorians sought to demonstrate. In addition to making art available for view and sale to the public, primarily the

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[43]Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2007), 351. Also see Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

wealthy elite, the Academy sought to celebrate English artists and, by extension to promote an English style rather than a French or Italian school. Italian and French great "foreign" painters in the early and middle eighteenth century overshadowed the many great British artists. The royal family had failed to promote the fine arts or English artists, leading to a lackluster foundation for a proper British style or school of art.[44] British nationalism and the creation of the ideal English citizen could not be complete without a well-established and respected art culture to rival the rest of the world.

For many years, attempts were made to create a British school of art or a British style. Many loose associations of artists existed before the Academy's founding, but few became institutionalized or supported by the monarchy.[45] An example of one group was founded by the painter Sir James Thornhill (1675-1734).[46] In addition to the Thornhill school, William Hogarth supported a group of artists, which later led to the Society of Artists of Great Britain's founding. This group of artists held community exhibitions that made art accessible to the public and promoted patronage and the education of public tastes in art. Thus, the birth of art reviews came into being. These early forms of art criticism were broad and superficial. They would later transform into a significant reporting genre that would become more sensitive to changing tastes and methods, as this thesis will explore in more detail.[47] However, as successful as the Society of Artists was, the organization was still not backed or funded by the monarchy and therefore was not a national institution set up for lasting success.

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[44] William Sandby, *The History of the Royal Academy*, 1 – 16.
[45] Peter Sawbridge, *A little History of the Royal Academy of Arts* (London: Royal Academy of Arts Publication, 2018), 17 – 18.
[46] Sandby, *The History of the Royal Academy,* 21.
[47] Renate Prochno, "Nationalism in British Nineteenth-Century Painting: Sir Joshua Reynolds and Benjamin West," *Studies in the History of Art* 29, Symposium Papers XIII: Nationalism in the Visual Arts, 1991, 26 – 29.

The Royal Academy was established in 1768 with much persuasion by King George's architect, Sir William Chambers, and the painter Sir Joshua Reynolds. Sir Joshua Reynolds, a well-known portrait painter and first president of the Royal Academy, reiterated the importance of the high art hierarchy that placed History and its sub-genre Biblical painting at the very top of importance.[48] Reynolds spent his younger days traveling Europe, visiting places such as Rome, where the Old Masters heavily influenced him.[49] In his *Discourses*, he praised the importance of the works and the merits of studying and emulating Rome's great masters.[50] From these influences, Reynolds promoted the Grand Manner and published many writings and lectures on this idealized style that he based on the cartoons of Raphael.[51] Reynolds believed that high art should be beautiful and aesthetically pleasing. Influential figures, such as the heroes and important men suggested by Carlyle, should be represented as perfect and idealized, not as they are seen precisely by the human eye. These beliefs were widely held by many in the art world. Although sometimes contested by lecturers and other Academicians, the hierarchy of History and biblical painting, and Reynoldian canon remained prominent in the art society.[52]

The Royal Academy established that with the Grand Manner, English artists could raise English art status and compete culturally with the High Art of Italy and France. The Academy was to become one way to define what it meant to be a cultured Englishman. Reynolds upheld that westward emulation of the Classical arts was the most admirable production of art, and in turn, the Academy became the home and protector of English culture. Reynolds wrote:

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[48] Prochno, "Nationalism," 28 – 29.

[49] Old Masters were artists such as Michelangelo, Raphael, Titian, etc.

[50] The *Discourses* were a series of lectures given at the Academy of Arts between the years 1769 and 1790. Throughout these lectures Reynolds established theories on art and the practice of art. Most of his ideals were grounded in Classical antiquity, mostly High Renaissance characteristics exemplified by the artist Raphael.

[51] "Cartoon" was not understood as the term we know now. Our definition of cartoon then would have been called a caricature. Cartoons, in Victorian high art, were defined as plans or sketches meant to be transferred to an official completed work such as a painting, tapestry, fresco, etc.

The arts have ever been disposed to travel westward. Greece is thought to have received them from her more eastern neighbors. From the Greeks they migrated to Italy; from thence they visited France, Flanders, and Holland, enlightening, for a time, those countries, through with diminished lustre…Let us for a moment flatter ourselves that they are still in being, and have at last arrived at this island.[53]

The Victorian obsession with the Classics was not unique to Reynolds and art. Classical educations defined refinement, education, and most notably status and wealth. Classical texts were used to educate future businessmen and aristocrats. Elite education included Latin poems and literature. Classical educations "formed, as well as informed, the mind not just for a gentleman but for a figure of authority. Classical education was a primary example of how elite education, wealth and status, and privilege worked together. Those trained in the Classics moved into religious, political, high arts, and government positions of society.[54] Simply put, Classical studies and art were a Victorian symbol of a refined, educated, and cultured civilized nation.

Traditions, Ideals, and Progress

Reynold's publications were considered textbooks for art students for many years after his presidency. He set the expectations for teaching the liberal arts and set the tone for great art. His writings elevated these works to a noble and "dignified" status. Reynolds explained that although History and biblical painting did not imitate the natural likeness of the subject, it was an artistic license that allowed the artist to represent the figure in the greatness that the subject embodied.[55] If Millais is the prime example for unconventional challenge to style, Charles Eastlake is an example of acceptance and tradition. In the decades before Millais's debut of *Christ*, Eastlake

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[53] Reynolds, *Discourses*, quoted in James Fenton, *School of Genius: A History of the Royal Academy of Arts* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2006), 102.

[54] Simon Goldhill, *Victorian Culture and Classical Antiquity: ART, Opera, Fiction, and the Proclamation of Modernity* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011), 1 – 5.

[55] Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible,* 22 – 23.

presented several paintings of biblical scenes. According to Geibelhausen, Eastlakes critical acclaim and success was made possible by his religious paintings. Eastlake's history and religious paintings were characterized by "softened academic style" that consisted of delicate brushwork and tonality.[56]

For *Christ Blessing Little Children* (1839), Eastlake received praise in the *Art Union* at its 1839 Royal Academy exhibition: "This is perhaps the most faultless picture in the exhibition; is most honourable to the British school; and one indeed of which the age and country may be justly proud."[57] Jesus is seated in the center of the painting and surrounded by women and children. The arrangement of the figures is reminiscent of Raphaelesque poses and the tonal qualities are like those in works by Titian. Other religious subject paintings by Eastlake were praised for their melancholy, execution, composition, and subtle coloring. Art critics were drawn to his paintings because of emotional responses they evoked and the academic qualities they embodied.[58] By the mid-nineteenth century, however, appropriate rendering of biblical stories came under heavy scrutiny. As biblical criticisms and discoveries in the sciences increased, the Scriptures' authority that Protestants believed in was in question. Two of the differences between the Protestant and Catholic forms of devotion lies in the uses of scripture and religious imagery and ornamentation. Protestants believed that Catholicism was not scripturally based and allowed for too much blind idolatry of saints, priests, objects, and simple humans.[59] Protestants may describe themselves as "People of the word" with little focus on imagery or relics.[60] Since the Reformation, Protestants sought to eradicate the Catholic visual worship and replace it with a personal relationship with

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[56] Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible,* 48.
[57] Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible,* 49.
[58] Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible,* 50.
[59] Carol Engelhardt Herringer, *Victorians and the Virgin Mary: Religion and Gender in England 1830 - 1885* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 7.
[60] Andrew T. Coates, *What is Protestant Art?* (The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill nv. 2018), 1 – 6.

scripture. However, Protestantism has had a complicated relationship with religious imagery. Since the Reformation, were rethinking biblical art production and how religious figures were visually reproduced. By the mid-Victorian century Biblical and religious imagery was still contested and in constant redefinition.[61]

Figure 2: Charles Eastlake, *Christ Blessing Little Children,* 1839.

Nativity images became more common as the importance of Christmas as a holiday emerged in part by Charles Dicken's *A Christmas Carol* and Queen Victoria's Christmas tree. As nativity images popularized, images of the Mother Mary received diverse reactions from Protestants. Primarily the elite Protestants viewed many of these images as art and aesthetic. When Victorian Protestants traveled abroad, images of the Virgin and Child were described as "charming" relics.[62] Reactions such as those suggest that when it came to art and aesthetics, images

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[61] *What is Protestant Art?* By Coates describes the complicated relationship between Protestants and acceptable visual art. It is noted that while most Protestants accepted some uses of imagery and artworks, not all agreed and considered it too much like Catholicism. He traces the historical use of images beginning with the painstaking wood cut illustrations that were meant to be read alongside the new interpretation of the Bible. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries were marked by images of devotion and piety such as familial scenes with a Bibles.
[62] Herringer, *Victorians and the Virgin Mary,* 82.

of the Virgin and Child were more acceptable and somewhat free of the Protestant judgements normally associated with Catholic Marian imagery.

Protestant ideas, such as the Virgin Mary's role, changed drastically during the Victorian Age. After the Church of England separated from the Roman Catholic church, public biblical imagery changed drastically. Protestants believed that the Virgin Mary's Catholic worship was exaggerated and bordered on exalting a mere human to a divine status she did not merit. According to Protestant Biblical scripture, Mary was merely a woman that gave birth to Jesus and did not necessarily carry a more important role.[63] However, early Protestants did not stamp out the positive role of Mary as the mother of God. Instead, they sought to diminish her role from the Catholic status of a saint to a simple model of good behavior. In the art world, the Reynoldian Grand Manner continued to produce beautiful, idealized images of the Scriptures and the Holy Family. High art was protected from the outside world by the Royal Academy and its values. Since the images were high art, meant to eventually hang in an aristocrat's drawing-room or be sold to a private collector, the risk of the Virgin Mary being a worshipped idol in a Protestant home was not a concern. Protestant art had separated itself successful from overly devotional Marian and angelic imagery, narrative scenes, allegorical, and educational scenes were acceptable. Reynolds, in his *Discourses*, did not specifically mention Religious or Biblical art, but included it under the History painting category. Reynolds did not consider religious or Biblical painting to be a category of its own and painted several scenes himself. One such painting from 1788 - 1789 is *The Holy Family with the Infant St. John.* This painting was acceptable for Protestant viewers as it is an idealized image of the figures. It resembles a narrative story found in History painting. There is little to no emphasis on the religiosity of the painting's subjects. There are not glowing halos, angel wings, crosses, or

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[63] Herringer, *Victorians and the Virgin Mary,* 77 – 78.

symbols. In fact, one criticism that art critic John Ruskin made about Reynold's painting was that it failed to act as a vehicle for Christian belief.[64] It was merely a history painting of a Biblical narrative which made this image of Mary and baby Jesus an acceptable Protestant painting.[65] Yet, in 1849, Priscilla Lydia Sellon, the foundress of the Anglican Society of Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Trinity, was under fire for putting a framed photo of the Virgin Mary at the altar of an orphanage. Because Sellon placed the Virgin Mary image in an area of worship, she was accused of leading the children away from the Church of England. The image placement promoted idol worship of the Virgin, which Protestants rejected.[66]

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[64] John Ruskin was an important, influential, and intimate figure to the Pre-Raphaelites. Because he is such an important figure worthy of an entirely separate study, I have chosen to limit the amount of space dedicated to him in this research for fear that it would otherwise distract from the real foci of my study. Ruskin was not only an art critic, but he wrote about art theories, movements, thoughts, qualities, and more. His work tended to focus on the transcendental and emotive qualities of art as well as the "back to nature" ideals that the Pre-Raphaelites, too, focused on. Like the Brotherhood, Ruskin chose the academic ideals of the Academy as his point of parting from traditional art, just as the Brotherhood did, and Ruskin's writings and critiques helped to establish and renew an interest in early art. His critiques supported the Brotherhood, and he eventually became intimately involved with the members, particularly Millais, who eventually married Ruskin's former wife.

[65] Madeleine E. Thiele, "Social and Religious Themes in English Art 1840 – 1860 by Lindsay Errington Part 5" Madeleine E. Thiele (Blog), May 21, 2015, https://madeleineemeraldthiele.wordpress.com/2015/05/21/social-and-religious-themes-in-english-art-1840-1860-by-lindsay-errington-part-5/.

[66] Herringer, *Victorians and the Virgin Mary,* 1.

Figure 3: Sir Joshua Reynolds, The Holy Family with the Infant St. John, 1788 – 1789.

The middle of the nineteenth century began a drastic shift for the Protestant image of the Virgin Mary. Catholicism's gradual rise made images of the Virgin Mary more prominent in public as a worship figure.[67] The Catholic Virgin Mary became a contested public discussion. In centuries before, Protestants only wished to diminish the Virgin's importance. As the nineteenth century progressed, the Protestant reaction to her image in worship became more negative. Victorian Protestants, however, deemed her as a symbol of false religion, a pagan goddess, and the epitome of Anti-Catholic ideals.[68] Images of the Virgin Mary were to be found in any bourgeois drawing-room, Sellon argued in her defense. Since the image was placed in an area of devotion and worship, she was still considered guilty.[69] An image of the Virgin Mary and Christ was protected in private homes of the aristocracy and the Royal Academy since it was not used as an image of worship or

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[67] Herringer, *Victorians and the Virgin Mary,* 1 – 7.

[68] Herringer, *Victorians and the Virgin Mary,* 2.

[69] Herringer, *Victorians and the Virgin Mary,* 2.

at an altar, but as art that represented morals, values, and status. The paintings' idealistic qualities and status as high art protected images such as the Virgin Mary from Protestant scrutiny. However, artists, such as the Brotherhood, and new patrons, such as the rising middle-class, sought an end to the ideal monotony encouraged and protected by the Royal Academy. It is undeniable that the Brotherhood's interjection in historical and Biblical art created the most upheaval for Victorian religion, art, and the future production of religious art.

Print Culture in Victorian England

The Brotherhood's intervention in religious art production would possibly have gone unnoticed by the public had it not been for magazines and periodicals. The discussions would have remained strictly within the borders of elite culture and Royal Academy discussions and lectures without the sensational public press and anonymous reviews of the Brotherhood's paintings.[70] The press's development and the diminishing cost of newsprint and printing technologies allowed more availability across Victorian society.[71] By 1843, there were over 130 daily, weekly, bi-monthly, quarterly, and weekend magazines and newspapers that reported on public news. The expansion of literacy in the eighteenth century was due to increased church and primary schools that taught reading. Illustrated books and magazines, and public readings, granted access to those that remained illiterate as well. By the middle of the nineteenth century, newspapers had become a new social aspect of Victorian daily life that crossed all levels of society and was no longer limited to educated elite classes. The industrialization of print, faster transportation, the repeal of the Stamp Act, and public education allowed a new profession to begin.[72] Although typically anonymous

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[70] Wendy Graham, *Critics, Coteries, and Pre-Raphaelite Celebrity*, 13.

[71] Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England,* Second Ed. (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2009), 238 – 239.

[72] Graham, *Critics, Coteries, and Pre-Raphaelite Celebrity,* 48 – 50., Jan-Melissa Schramm *Censorship and the Representation of the Sacred in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 1 – 4,;

until the latter half of the century, the critic was considered separate from a writer. "Writer" was considered a profession, but "journalist" or "critic" was not until the 1880s.[73] Yet without the critic, the Brotherhood and Millais would not have received the same amount of attention, whether negative or positive.

Many of the printed newspapers held a section for literature and art reviews that had begun to increase in number since the beginning of the Royal Academy exhibitions in the late eighteenth century. Reviews of the Royal Academy exhibitions each year, enabling the public to digest the hundreds to thousands of different submissions more easily. Art reviews were generally anonymous. To increase sales, the 1860s journals included journalists' signatures. In turn, writers began to make a name for themselves.[74] Initially, art reporting was dry and functional. The tone was disinterested, and the function was to inform on the best available artwork in the market. As it progressed, the function also took on an educational aspect as some reviewers felt their role was to educate readers on taste.[75] By the end of the century, these art reviews had become well scripted and used a specific technical language to describe the works of art and literature.[76] Although various authors, these RA reviews became prescribed. The technical language used to describe the paintings often reinforced Royal Academy beliefs and traditions and created a specific imagined community for those with sentiments to the arts. Art writing became a "culture police," but was also influenced by the culture it was policing.[77] As journalism matured, literature and art reviews created a social and cultural system that constructed the viewing/reading experience. These

Matthew Rubery, *The Novelty of Newspapers: Victorian Fiction After the Invention of the News* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1 – 4.

[73] Usha Wilbers, "'Who are we to judge?': Issues of Identity and Cultural Authority in Late Victorian Metacritical Debate," Victorian *Periodicals Review* 46, no. 3, 2013, 386.

[74] Graham, *Critics, Coteries, and Pre-Raphaelite Celebrity,* 13.

[75] Fletcher and Helmreich, "The Periodical and the Art Market," 324.

[76] Technical language is the term I have used to describe a specific, but not canon or official, use of words by the art critics and writers to describe the paintings and other artistic works during the time.

[77] Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible,* 98 – 99.

periodical reviews helped regulate and enforce norms about the value of work, work ethic, the realistic or ideal depictions of life, domestic ideals, gender conventions, and domestic and imperial subject matter.[78] However, in its early days, art journalism had little precedent and was less conscripted than it later became. The Royal Academy's teachings, mainly the Reynoldian canon, became the foundation for reviewers to form their opinions about the works. The periodical art reviews reflected the values and morals linked to academic discourse associated with the Royal Academy. The reviews infer that for an artist to go against the traditional values of art taught by the Royal Academy, he rejected nationalism and notions of progress notions. The reviewer policed the public reaction to the art and the public reaction that shaped the review.[79]

Since print reviews of art and literature made art appreciation more accessible to all levels of society, the growing middle-class could gain access to buying and collecting art. The art world was traditionally associated as being filled with the extravagant aristocracy of the idolatrous Catholics, but the middle-class changed the art world and the art market. The middle-class was broken into two smaller classes: The first was the upper-middle-class, made up primarily of professionals, industrialists, and bankers. These men were generally able to be educated, and boarding schools and boys and girls received some level of etiquette training. Lower middle-class members consisted of merchant and clerical workers who were literate, educated, and had manners. Despite some differences in wealth and status, the middle-class generally held the same morals and values. The necessity of working for their position and money led the middle-class to value hard work, sexual morality, individual responsibility, and other pious notions of respect and

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[78] Julie Codell, The Art press and its Parodies: Unraveling Networks in Swinburne's 1868 Academy Notes," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 44, no. 2, 2011, 1.
[79] Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible,* 99.

value.[80] Family togetherness and Protestantism became the cornerstones of a middle-class life.[81] These ideals shifted the Victorian art market to favor art connected to morality and Protestant religiosity. Genre art reproductions, art dealers, and artist celebrities became new nuances of the previously rigid and traditionally structured art world associated only with the Royal Academy and Reynoldian canon. The growing connection between Protestantism and free art market increased as biblical painting became an essential aspect of the Victorian print market. Later paintings by Millais and Hunt in the 1860s featured feminine virtue and pious family scenes that became popular prints found in middle-class drawing rooms. Giebelhausen argued that the praise and prominence of religious painting within print media were what attracted the Brotherhood to religious painting as a mode to rebel against the academy. However, regardless of intent, Millais succeeded in shaking up the art world with his religiously themed painting of Christ with his family in 1850.

CHAPTER 2: THE PUBLIC EMERGENCE OF THE PRE-RAPHAELITE BROTHERHOOD

The year 1849 began a significant shift for Victorian Art. There was growing support for artists to exhibit their works alternate to the Royal Academy and their strict restraints. It was the peak of public preferences in popular subjects of art. There was also a massive boom in the production and sale of printed copies of popular artworks. Most importantly, it was the year that Brotherhood members Hunt, Millais, and D.G. Rossetti presented their new "Medieval" styles to the world. Two exhibitions took place that year. The first began in March. The "Free Exhibition"

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[80] Martha Tedeschi, "'Where the Picture Cannot Go, The Engravings Penetrate': Prints and the Victorian Art Market", *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 31, no. 1 Objects of Desire: Victorian Art and the Art Institute of Chicago, 2005, 9 – 10.
[81] Amy Woodson-Boulton, "'Industry Without Art is Brutality': Aesthetic Ideology and Social Practice in Victorian Art Museums," *Journal of British Studies* 46, 2007, 47.

was held by the National Institute of Fine Arts. The second was the Royal Academy Exhibition held later in May. The National Institute of Fine Arts sought to provide artists with less restrictive space than the exhibitions put on by the Royal Academy of Arts. The "Free Exhibition" was where D.G. Rossetti and associate Ford Maddox Brown chose to exhibit their works rather than the Academy where Hunt and Millais presented. Another significant change for this year was what Sarah Turner called "the passing of the greats." Like William Turner and Charles Leslie, many of the older generations of great artists presented fewer works, or their submissions were not living up to their previously established reputations. Sarah Turner deemed this the opportune time for new and younger artists to situate themselves in better positions within the Academy and the art world.[82]

This chapter will explore the reviews on Ford Maddox Brown and the Brotherhood's paintings exhibited in 1849, to compare them to Millais's *Christ* the following year. The following pages will explore the language, general and technical, and descriptions that the critics used in the printed press to review the paintings. It is important to see how this language, tone, and overall quality of the critical responses changed from this year to the next. Through this analysis this chapter also shows the influence of both public taste as well as the reviewers' opinions and how these factors determined the success of an artist. The growing popularity and availability of press exasperated the changes the Victorian art world was undergoing. Reviews of both exhibitions in the press ultimately controlled but were also influenced by the public's responses to the exhibited paintings. Public reaction was essential to artists such as the Brotherhood men. It could have been one reason Rossetti chose to exhibit at the free exhibition rather than the Academy. Regardless of

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[82] Mark Hallett, Sarah Victoria Turner, Jessica Feather, Baillie Card, Tom Scutt, and Maisoon Rehani, eds. The Royal Academy Summer Exhibition: A Chronicle, 1769–2018. London: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2018. https://www.chronicle250.com

the venue, however, the Brotherhood's new style did not go without notice by the press. Many of the art reviews found in the press spent more words reviewing the Brotherhood and their like-minded associate Brown. The various printed reviews, although mostly positive, spoke on the paintings' significant technicalities. These reviews contrast severely with the reactions printed in the reviews just a year later when Millais presented a profoundly religious work in the same style as before.

Despite the exhibition venue, the reviews' authors still emphasized the primacy of the Academy dogma in their criticisms. Most of the reviews reflect the teachings of the Royal Academy and the traditions of Sir Joshua Reynolds. Academic art standardized and promoted Greek and Roman Classical aesthetics, European tradition, and historical subject matter. Raphael, Titian, Michelangelo, Jacque Louis David, and other masters of painting and sculpture were considered models for great art. Compositional harmony, subtle and natural complimenting colors, perfect idealized bodies, and figures, and flowing graceful movements were some characteristics of a successful painting and a skillful artist. Several of the paintings that received academic praise at the 1849 Eighty-first Royal Academy Exhibition were landscapes, portraits, and domestic scenes.

> Mr. Stanfield is in great force in this exhibition. In his river scene off Tilbury Fort, in his scenes in Italy and elsewhere, and in his moonlight view off the Reculvers, he displays all those varied powers in which have made his fame…Mr. Stanfield, presents features of less wild and rugged beauty than those which inspired the great Italian artist, the composition is picturesque, and the figures are drawn and coloured with great spirit and character."[83]

Here the reviewer praised the artist's execution of soft colors and beauty that created a picturesque landscape. Edwin Landseer was also praised for his landscapes and scenes of nature.

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[83] "The Exhibition of the Royal Academy," *The Morning Chronicle*, 05 May 1849, 5.

The Forester's Family is an idealized scene of two figures with deer surrounding them. "The deer are the perfection of graceful beauty, and there is great character in the little roguish-looking Highlander, who is walking along so cannily with the horns on his shoulder." Furthermore, review complimented the color and tone as "a perfect gem."[84] The two figures in this painting have beautiful, rounded faces and soft-colored flawless skin. The scene, which would likely not happen naturally in real-life, is eloquent and graceful. The figures, although ideally perfect in their composition, do not have any unnatural contortions of limbs or uncomfortable poses. The lighting of the landscape and the topography are just as graceful as the figures' movements and the composition of the deer.

Figure 4: Sir Edwin Landseer, *The Forester's Family*, 1849.

"Mr. Webster has contributed one of the best pictures in the exhibition—*A Slide*." This domestic scene of boys playing on ice, although described as "urchins," was praised as a one of the best in the exhibition of that year. It was described as full of emotions and beauty such as "fun, grief, and passion, in those engaged in the strife, are irresistible; and the ice is a perfect copy of

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[84] "The Exhibition of the Royal Academy," *The Morning Chronicle*, 05 May 1849, 5.

nature."[85] Comments of praise like these become curious and contradictory to modern readers such as us when the same qualities and types of images in the Brotherhood's images were so adverse. The Brotherhood also painted lower class people, scenes with landscape views, animals, graceful figures, and formations taken directly from nature. However, as the following research will show, the critical reaction to their works was quite different for many different reasons.

Figure 5: Thomas Webster, *A Slide*, 1849.

The 1849 reviews focused primarily on three major critical points within each painting based off some of these idealistic qualities. The first was the naivety of the artists. The reviews suggested their young age was the reason for the lack of mastery over their skills, and therefore the results were promising, but risky paintings were the consequence. The second issue follows in hand with the first. Their youth and naivety explained the fascination with new art trends, such as adherence to the outdated "Medieval" art or early Florentine art. This explanation was the only way the authors could justify the Brotherhood and Brown's turn away from academic Reynoldian

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[85] "The Exhibition of the Royal Academy," *The Morning Chronicle*, May 5, 1849, 5.

methods and early Christian painting methods. The third matter many of the reviews highlighted was how artists rendered people in the paintings. The meticulous attention to detail and the meticulous rendering of their models were two of the primary anti-academic techniques the artists used. It is not until 1850 that we see a stark change in the reviewer's reactions to the Brotherhood, where a fourth issue arose. After they publicized their manifesto in the Brotherhood's magazine *The Germ,* it was clear to the public and reviewers that it was not naivety or lack of talent but the artists' intent that resulted in anti-academic artworks.

Growing Artist Resentment towards the Academy and the Free Exhibition[86]

The Royal Academy faced criticism for its inability to represent artists' needs and wants. Short-lived organizations such as the National Institute of Fine Arts were born out of such frustrations. *The Observer* noted that great contemporary artworks were out of sight and only available in specific settings without such organizations.[87] This comment is most likely referring to the limitations of the Royal Academy's Exhibitions. An article that reviewed a meeting of the Society of British Artists written in 1847 listed three necessary changes that the Royal Academy needed to make. The rivalry presented by the Institute encouraged change within the Academy. If the Royal Academy wished to remain at the forefront of English culture and artistic influence, it would need to adjust to young new artists' wants and needs. The first problem stated was the lack of space in the more extensive gallery for art. Inadequate space limited younger and newer artists' availability to present their works and left only room for the most elite and praised artists among

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[86] It is worth noting that although the exhibition was titled "free," it did not mean monetarily. The artists still had to rent their space. What the organization meant by "free" was that it was not restrictive like the Royal Academy in manner of what could be presented and whereas it related to a lottery. "Free" meant that it was free of institutional role of assignment, priority, or importance. The catalogue for the exhibit featured the prices for each artwork that was exhibited since the focus of the event was to promote the sale of art.
[87] "Free Exhibitions," *The Observer* October 21, 1849, 5.

the Academy. The second was the necessity to extend their number of Associates. The third was to make the hanging committee permanent and be overseen by a government officer, assumed to ensure consistency and equality amongst the paintings' position to be exhibited. The author of this review stressed, with these necessary amendments, the need for the academy to become more non-bias. artistic success determined by popular opinion was achieved if artists were treated equally in the Academy regarding their exhibitions.[88] The *Literary Gazette* described the difficulty of viewing many works of art, a characteristic of the Royal Academy that was not outright mentioned. It also approved of an alternative organization and exhibition space that supported the interests of artists rather than the prestige of the organization itself:

> It will strike every visitor that many of these productions, though exhibited before, will be seen here for the first time; as high and low places, octagon-rooms, and mixture with architecture, or other incongruities, have prevented their having a previous chance of vision and appreciation. For these and for novelties, the production of the metropolis and more particularly of meritorious provincial artists, this plan offers a perpetual mart, susceptible of, and calling for, continual change.[89]

Statements such as this and a printed announcement for the Free Exhibition describing its purpose as "To Improve Public Taste" make it appear as though groups of artists and art critics were unsatisfied with the presentation and selection of public exhibitions in the Royal Academy. Whether it was considered stale or too consistent and boring, a growing number of English artists and critics wanted change. The two other statements made in the purpose of the exhibition sided with the artists. The first statement was "Freedom of the artist," and the second was "Certainty of Exhibition." This statement implied that the Royal Academy was also failing the artist and not just the assumed public taste. These three statements underline the purpose of the Exhibitions in Hyde Park apart from the Royal Academy. The Royal Academy remained the pinnacle of artistic success.

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[88] "Society of British Artists – Schools of Art," *The Standard* October 5, 1847, 3.
[89] "Association for the Free Exhibition of Modern Art," *Literary Gazette* May 16, 1847, 58 – 59.

Artists and critics hoped that the National Institute of Fine Art's rising success and the organization's more positive approach to change and support for the artist would put pressure on the Royal Academy to follow suit.

In addition to rallying support for the individual artists, there was also a discussion on the Royal Academy's dated qualities. *The Standard* presented an article on a separate organization of British artists created to modernize art teaching to reflect the latest scientific and literary thought. It mentioned that although the Royal Academy had been sufficient and significant at its founding, it could no longer keep up with the changing modern environment of the mid-1800s.

> Science and literature have made an advance since that time; have been more widely diffused; they have founded their institutions, and they have founded colleges and schools for instruction and improvement proportioned to the advance of times. Is art alone to remain behind, and be content with the one public school which was considered sufficient in 1760? [90]

The article in *The Standard* continued to rally support the new organization of artists and expressed the need for new teaching art schools to fill the void where the Royal Academy was failing. There were plans for new schools of art, such as the study of anatomy. A new anatomy course would embrace the human body's scientific study necessary for artists to render people accurately rather than idealistically. Second, and essential for this research, is the school to study antiquity. The author did not speak on the Greek and Roman antiquities as Reynolds, and the Royal Academy did. Instead, it praised the qualities of "Medieval" Christian thought, however not within pictorial art but literature:

> If ever art is destined to attain a high degree of eminence in this country it will be, as before, when for a short period it achieved its greatest efforts by union of the deep feeling, pathos, and intense thought of the medieval or Christian art, with that largeness, fullness, and grandeur of style of antiquity – it would be to refer to

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[90] "Society of British Artists – Schools of Art," *The Standard* October 5, 1847, 3.

literature, by expressing the pathos, copiousness, and depth of thought in the middle ages in the noble and flowing diction of the ancients.[91]

The third way the organization sought to move art education into the future was comparative anatomy. The author stressed the school's importance above all others. The author further expressed concern that it was not being taught within art education. To stress the failure, he stated the horse was the noblest example of animals that artists should know how to construct anatomically. The fourth, fifth, sixth, and so forth schools for art education were "most recent and improved" technical systems of artwork such as still life, perspective, and chromatics. This new school's many ways to modernize art education is a small window into the Royal Academy's perceived failings to update their methods.

Additionally, it shows that the fascination with "Medieval" art and science and literature's progressiveness was not limited to the Brotherhood. Others saw the spiritual and pious qualities that the production of "Medieval" art and literature had to offer. Also, science, such as human anatomy and still life, were both considered crucial.[92] John Ruskin advocated for the revival of Gothic Architecture with his evangelical language and thoughts.[93] This need to return the spiritual aspect of creating art was a staunch rejection of what many artists believed the art market was becoming driven by academic rules, artistic fame, or money. This evidence shows that change was wanted in the art world, and the Brotherhood took advantage of this in 1849.

On the other hand, important figures such as Charles Dickens perceived the Brotherhood's admiration of "Medieval" art as a threat to academic standards and society. Although new schools

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[91] "Society of British Artists – Schools of Art," *The Standard* October 5, 1847, 3.

[92] Anne Helmreich, *Nature's Truth: Photography, Painting and Science in Victorian Britain (*PA: Pennsylvania State University Press), 2016.

[93] John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1849). Ruskin interpreted art and architecture in moral, religious, and political ways. His writings connected all disciplines across Victorian culture. In his view of Gothic architecture, it represented a time before Renaissance corruption and frivolity. Ruskin and the Brotherhood viewed art, architecture, and literature prior to the Renaissance as superior to the Renaissance art followed by Reynolds and the Academy.

advocated for art progression and battled the stale methods taught at the Academy, not everyone agreed with the trend towards retrogressive practices such as "Medievalism."

"Progress" was a buzzword in the years leading up to the first international world fair, the Great Exhibition in 1851. It was associated with every aspect of life, and that included the art world. Like science and literature, art should grow and advance over time to develop into more sophisticated forms and ideas. The men of the Brotherhood were, by these standards, retrogressive.[94] In 1849, the Brotherhood was not a severe threat. The reviews indicate a mild yet stern and corrective reaction to their "Medieval" and early Italian styles. It was not until the publication of their magazine *The Germ* that influential authors began to see the Brotherhood as a severe threat to art progress. Politically, the retrogressive perception of medieval revivalism reminded the public of the small, yet active group of "Young England" members. Lord John Manners and George Sydney Smythe, two British politicians, believed that the answer to the society's problems laid within the restoration of medieval feudalism. They believed that the Anglican church, social and communal activities would bring closer relations between the different social classes.[95] Their ideas, such as Manners view that monastic architecture would fill a spiritual void, happened to align with those of the Oxford Movement. "the England one loves is composed of churches and monuments, and songs, and bits of history, and names; not merely the country as it is and its present inhabitants."[96] Manners wrote these words in private letters in 1839. He wrote that to please the lower classes, public functions, games, holy-days, and public comforts should be provided by legislature and the aristocracy. "voting money to build public baths, to keep up, or

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[94] J. B. Bullen, *The Pre-Raphaelite Body: Fear and Desire in Painting, Poetry, and Criticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

[95] Richard A. Gaunt, "Toryism and the Young England Movement," Chapter in *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Medievalism*, Ed. by Joanne Parker and Corinna Wagner (Oxford: Oxford University Press,) E-book 486.

[96] Richard A. Gaunt, "Toryism and the Young England Movement," E-Book 491.

rather to restore, public games, to form public walks, that we are their real friends. Let us give them back the Church hoy-days, open the Churches and Cathedrals to them, and let our men of power in their individual capacities assume a more personal and consequently a more king intercourse with those below them. In a word let society take a more feudal appearance than it presents now."[97] The men believed their idealized utopian view of the feudal past would solve problems between the classes and create a nurturing and thankful relationship between them.

However, the movement was pulled in different directions by 1845 with internal differences mainly pertaining to the support of Irish-British policies, specifically the Maynooth Grant. The moral and religious revivalism originally sought by small group of men was dismantled by religion and politics. The threat of regression to the modern achievements of England began with the influence of the German Nazarenes, continued with the Young England movement, and resurfaced to the public as the Pre-Raphaelites. British religious and political history of anti-Catholicism and the feat of absolutist control from rulers and the church painted Victorian reactions to "Medievalism" in any form.

Defining Medievalism in Nineteenth Century Victorian Culture

The word "medieval" to the Victorian understanding was relatively vague and did not hold the same connotations and academic dates that we hold to it today. The general understanding of "medieval" history was period before the Renaissance and was divided into two sections, the "Dark Ages" and the "Middle Ages." The medieval trend in Victorian art was more than an inference of regression and unrefined artistic skill. In 1844 the word "Medievalism" was used for the first time in an Anglo Catholic magazine to describe the influence of medieval

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[97] Richard A. Gaunt, "Toryism and the Young England Movement," E-Book 491.

culture on Victorian society. As diverse as Victorian Medieval study was it encompassed religion, architecture, literature, art, English history, and other cultural aspects.[98] Although Victorian Classicism dominated Victorian life, Medievalism had positive and negative impacts Victorian Medievalism had roots further back in time that began with Anglo-Saxonism. Socially and politically, both Medievalism and Anglo-Saxonism represented the history of English culture and collective sense of Nationalism. Victorians looked back to primordial Anglo-Saxon history as the beginning of a national identity. Scholar Joseph Bosworth published a dictionary of Anglo-Saxon words in the 1848. "Every Englishman who glories in the vigour of his *Father land* – who would clearly understand and *feel the full force of his Mother tongue,* ought to study Anglo-Saxon." Bosworth encouraged the study and use of Anglo-Saxon language in poetry and writing to express their national pride and freedom.[99] According to Bosworth, Victorian national identity was rooted in medievalism and the history of their language. The history of language identified the English as ancestrally distinct from the Celts and other foreign nations.

Although looking to the past helped the English to identify their history and national identity, by the end of the Victorian period, many saw Medievalism as an escapist and nostalgic cling to the past. Modern thought may find it difficult to imagine thoughts based largely on literary and artistic artifacts of a seemingly underdeveloped time (in comparison to the glorified splendor of the ancient Greece and Rome) as a progressive and modern innovation. The Brotherhood believed their works to be progressive and innovative, although they looked to the "Medieval" past for inspiration. To the Brotherhood and other Medievalists, the period inspired ethical, conservative, and natural production. As Joanne Parker and Corinna Wagner stated, the

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[98] Joanne Parker and Corinna Wagner, *Introduction*, Chapter in The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Medievalism, ed. Joanne Parker and Corinna Wagner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), E-Book 24 – 27.

[99] Will Abberly, "Philology, Anglo-Saxonism, and National Identity*,"* Chapter in *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Medievalism,* ed. Joanne Parker and Corinna Wagner, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

heart of the movement was centered around beauty, health, and happiness. Art and literature could simply be beautiful to promote the well-being of mankind.[100]

Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Ford Maddox Brown at the "Free Exhibition"

In 1849, the Hyde Park Gallery, also referred to as the Chinese Exhibition Gallery, or Hyde Park Corner, the organization, held its second exhibition for artists to gain notoriety or sell their works. Rossetti presented a religious subject of Mary titled *The Girlhood of the Virgin Mary,* discussed in the next chapter. Up and coming artist Ford Maddox Brown presented *Cordelia and King Lear* from the Shakespeare play. Although Brown was not a Brotherhood member and did not follow their strict anti-academic mindset, he admired "Medieval" revivalism. Brown and Rossetti were acquainted, and the two men mutually admired each other's work. However, Brown never officially aligned himself as a member.[101] The lack of affiliation did not prevent the press from lumping Brown's art alongside the Brotherhood members as the reviewers saw their works as remarkably similar in style.

Brown's painting of Cordelia was critiqued primarily on his technique. The reviewers focused on academic qualities such as color, the painting's composition, harmony, and other minor details related to the academic ideal. Cordelia's subject was important to Brown since it represented one of the great men of history that were important to artists that created artworks in the History or biblical genre. Like many other artists, the Brotherhood had constructed a list of "The Greats" of history, with Jesus of Nazareth being the first and foremost historical figure and Shakespeare being the second. This list of important figures reflected Thomas Carlyle's list of immortal

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[100] Parker and Wagner, *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Medievalism,* E-Book 44.
[101] Colin Cruise, "'Sincerity and Earnestness': D.G. Rossetti's Early Exhibitions 1849-53" *The Burlington Magazine* 146, no. 1210, 2004, 4 – 6.

historical figures from his lectures, *Heroes, Hero Worship, and the Heroic in History.*[102] The "great men" of the past represented a time when spirituality reigned, and life was much simpler than the modernizing world, the Brotherhood and its associates lived.[103] Brown's painting illustrated the scene when Cordelia, King Lear's youngest of three daughters, kneeled at her father's bedside in her tent at the French Camp in Dover. Several reviews praised the painting for several reasons as a gifted example of future works from the artist. Most of the painting elements, such as its composition, represented the Royal Academy's teachings on ideal qualities.

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[102] Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1841).
[103] Helen O. Borowitz, "'King Lear' in the Art of Ford Maddox Brown. *Victorian Studies* 21, no. 3, Spring 1978, 309 – 334.

Figure 6: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Girlhood of Virgin Mary,* 1849.

Figure 7: Ford Madox Brown, Lear and Cordelia, *1849.*

The foreground of Brown's *Cordelia* is composed of the couch on which King Lear lies diagonally, creating the frame's bottom. Characters flank him, one being a physician tending to the king to the left of the frame and Cordelia and two onlookers to the right. The top of the frame of the painting is comprised of arches of Cordelia's tent. The middle ground is filled with the musicians while the scenery of the mountains and water add landscape. Aesthetically, the painting's composition is pleasing to the eye and is harmonious in design, with the strategic use of figures balancing each other out on all sides of the painting. The figures and details of the painting are somewhat period-accurate, relatively rare for the Victorian age, as period accuracy was one of the many contested techniques within art dogma.[104] Brown chose to dress his figures in sixth-century clothing, although it is assumed that King Leir lived in the eighth century.[105] Most 1849 reviews of this painting praised the previous details described above. Overall, Brown followed through with the academic teachings of the age. His inclusion of "Medieval" artistic qualities was more subtle than the Brotherhood artists in the same exhibition, but the "Medieval" elements did not go unnoticed by critics.

In the *Morning Chronicle*, the reviewer first praised Brown's exhibited paintings as most remarkable within the exhibition and quickly addressed their archaic and Mannerist qualities.[106] According to the writer, if the figures were painted in the infancy of art, they would have been beautiful and exquisite. No amount of detail or talent could have made the rendering of the figures appropriate for the age it was presented. The author of the review stated that despite Albrecht

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[104] Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible,* 23 – 24. The debate over period accuracy in history painting dated to that of Reynold's era. Classical era images were timeless and universal and therefore were appropriate to represent any time period in history painting. Reynold's taught that it was common sense for the viewer to understand the time and era that famous events took place, and it was not necessary for art to reflect period accuracy in details. However, in the first few decades of the nineteenth century, period accuracy was gaining popularity.

[105] Frances Fowle, "Ford Maddox Brown, Lear and Cordelia, 1849–54," *Tate Museum: Walk Through British Art: 1840,* 2000.

[106] "The Exhibition of Modern Art," *The Morning Chronicle*, March 26, 1849, 5.

Dürer, Van Eyck, Francia, and Wohlgemuth's apparent confusing influences, the shading,

coloring, tenderness, and placement of the other figures all led to a harmonious painting that

aligned with the most fundamental aspects of the academic ideal. England and Germany had strong

ties to one another culturally and included an English appreciation for German art. German

Romantic and early Renaissance art had a strong influence on the Brotherhood's artistic

innovations. The German Nazarenes were a particularly influential group. Parallels between their

works included subject matter, style, design, individual expression, and emotional content.[107] As

the review above mentioned their names, it is evident that the German and Dutch artists such as

Dürer, his teacher Michael Wolgemuth, and Jan Van Eyck were well-known to the critics. The *Art

Union* wrote in 1839, "The Germans are assuredly the great artists of Europe."[108] German art

appreciated even stretched to into official British architecture. The competition for artists to

decorate the New Palace of Westminster (183 – 1847) reflected the influences of German art.

Firstly, the use of frescoes to decorate the walls was a new concept, and secondly, Ludwig I of

Bavaria's patronage to the arts in Munich be used as an example of how to move forward. The

Nazarenes and German art had reintroduced fresco painting as decoration to the nation and in turn

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[107] The German speaking group of Nazarene painters formed in July of 1809 in Vienna. Like the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, this group of painters were eager to break free from the restraints of academic painting. They were known as the Brotherhood of St. Luke, Lukas Bund, or Lukasbrüder. The original group was made of primarily six members: Fredrich Overbeck, Franz Pforr, Ludwig Vogel, Johann Konrad Hottinger, Joseph Wintergest, and Joseph Sutter. Their goals were essentially like the later Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood's in that they looked back to the simplicity, beauty, and truth that was found in Pre-Raphaelite works of art, primarily what they believed to be "Medieval." The primary difference between the two groups though was that the former Brotherhood of St. Luke lived a semi-monastic lifestyle. They members occupied an abandoned monastery in Rome and lived similarly to the monastic artists of the past. Their works were particularly devotional and of religious subjects, more so than the original Pre-Raphaelite members initially presented. Further helpful reading can be found in a dissertation for the University of Georgia by Carol Lynn Kefalas. Through her work, she made a comparative analysis of dozens of works by each brotherhood. With this she showed a correlation and somewhat intimate relationship between the two. According to her research, the two groups, though decades apart, were aware of one another and some members shared correspondence.
Carol Lynn Kefalas, "The Nazarenes and the Pre-Raphaelites: A Comparative Analysis" (PhD Diss., University of Georgia, 1983), 7 – 16.
[108] William Vaughan, *German Romantic Painting*, Sec. Ed, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 163.

influenced the decisions for decorating the new English Parliamentary building. Despite the lack of relations with Southern Germany (German and British relations were strongest in Northern Germany) and the strong Catholic and absolutism rule of King Ludwig I, the National Committee in Britain sought to use this model to create a patriotic and national state-sponsored art. However, the negative responses, religiously and politically, prevented this from coming to full fruition. Religion was too important of a factor for British National Identity for a German model of artistic political representation.[109]

While most comments in the reviews implied a religious or political undertone, some comments were more straightforward. The art world was not free from religious terms, names, influences, or even unconscious comparisons. The author compared early Christian artistic qualities to using stylistic language found in older works like Chaucer to write a poem about Wycliffe. "Pedantic" was the specific word used to describe the similar way in which Brown used a "defunct" style to recreate a "Medieval" or antique subject: "Writing a poem on Wiecliffe, we should be though ridiculously pedantic if we used the phraseology and spelling of Chaucer; and so, it is equally an error in taste to adopt a defunct style of an antique or medieval subject."[110] The reviewer felt it was too repetitive to use an antiquated style to present a historical subject. The author implied that it did little to the meaning of the story and the subject of the painting to recreate it in the style of the period it represented. This hinted at the age-old argument in academic art on the presence of historicity in biblical and history painting.

The Morning Post was one that instead berated Brown's painting. Historian Robert Darnton has regarded this paper as somewhat hysterical in its news reporting; many news stories were either

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[109] Emma L. Winter, "German Fresco Painting and the new Houses of Parliament at Westminster, 1834 – 1851," *The Historical Journal,* 47, no. 2, June 2004, 291 – 295.

[110] "The Exhibitions of Modern Art," *The Morning Chronicle*, March 26, 1849, 5.

exaggerated or false.[111] The review made an important point: the artists ignored their own accepted and successful English style established and reiterated by the Royal Academy and instead used old methods from a transitional period in art. The review questioned why these promising young artists would look back to a transitionary period when they had a well-established method of creating English art. The creation of the Royal Academy in 1760 represented the need for an English school of art. The arts and literature were essential to the public's morality and virtues. Still, they also represented identity and cultural progress by looking towards Germany and France's prerequisite art for inspiration, and this article accused Brown of reversing English progress in art.

Aside from Brown's choice of inspiration, reviews also attacked the artists' basic techniques to create their paintings, linking them with outdated methods. The *Morning Chronicle* article raised two primary concern s; each surrounded the artistic approach. The first was the disproportionate modeling of Cordelia's body that resembled Mannerism, an art movement that made many uncomfortable due to the purposeful contorting and twisting of human bodies. The second was the confusing and antiquated use of style for the King and Cordelia's bodies and faces. Although stated as being beautiful for an antiquated time, the author clarified that Cordelia's beauty was not up to par with the ideal feminine figure imposed by the perfect model that Reynoldian discourse praised. The article praised King Lear's figure for coloring and shading but not the realistic details he rendered. But not all reviews offered a mixture of praise and concern for Brown's rendition of King Lear and Cordelia.

The previous article from *The Morning Chronicle* granted Brown some praise regarding an antiquated beauty about Cordelia. *The Morning Post* author described Cordelia as lacking any feminine qualities in Brown's rendering of her body. "Cordelia, who is supposed to be watching

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[111] Robert Darnton, "The True History of Fake News," *The New York Review*, February 13, 2017.

the waking of her royal parent, is a narrow, red-skinned wench with a querulous countenance."[112] This passage described Cordelia's movement and expression as forced and absent in any type of genuine emotion towards her father. "Her figure is without the graceful developments that denote womanhood, and her attitude is forced without being expressive."[113] The author believed that the only two things that could have made the painting any better were to cut out the ugly figures in the background and reduce them, if not wholly, rid the image of its Germanic influence. It is significant to note that the author did not finally write off the older masters of antiquity. It was Brown's failed attempt at replicating the artists that disgusted the reviewer.

> In style, Mr. Brown has changed only for the worse. He is less German, but he has become more antiquated. He now exemplifies the infancy of art. He affects the crudity without adopting the quaintness of the old illuminators and thereby creates a jumble of ideas which is far more distasteful than effective.[114]

The reviewer disagreed with the figures' unrealistic forms in the painting's background and the hardened edges of England's Cliffs. The author believed that Brown's figures and scenery were crudely represented. The choice to use "monkish hands" to describe Brown's work's artistry was possibly comparing these renderings to those of illuminated manuscripts or older. The author wished for Brown to dedicate his attention to detail to nature rather than the long-dead and defective mannerisms.

The *Art Journal* article praised Brown's work positively, commenting that there was not enough room in the article to speak on all the commendable qualities of the painting. *The Art Journal* did not publish a negative review of Brown's rendition of Lear and Cordelia. The reviewer commented that if other artists in the historical genre of high art were to put in half the effort of Brown, they would not complain about the lack of public demand for quality historical painting.

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[112] "Free Exhibitions of Modern Art," *The Morning Post*, March 28, 1849, 5.
[113] "Free Exhibitions of Modern Art," *The Morning Post*, March 28, 1849, 5.
[114] "Free Exhibitions of Modern Art," *The Morning Post*, March 28, 1849, 5.

The reviewer used the word "unpopular" to describe the current state of history painting in the public market. It is important to remember that history painting included biblical scenes and religious subjects. Since religious painting was a part of the highest hierarchy of painting, the Holy Family and biblical scenes were also held to a high standard, if not more than the average mythological scene or historical narrative. Religious painting was in decline by public demand. Records indicate that these paintings did not seem relevant to the new rising class of patrons in society. Genre painting and portraiture (the everyday life of ordinary people and landscapes) was becoming more popular.[115] It is possible new art buyers of the market consisted of the rising middle class of merchants rather than just the elite classes. In turn, art dealers wanted art more relevant to the everyday lives of working people. Elite classes did not want to see scenes of farmers laboring or milk maidens in the pasture. These images were considered ugly and lacked the world's ideological quality that surrounded elite members of society. Yet this does not account for the sudden lack of interest in religious art. Religious art in England free from denominational differences and class restrictions. Perhaps the lack of progression and following new artistic trends was one reason for the lack of interest and patronage in religious history paintings. Maybe, in the effort to remain timeless, religious history painting was being left behind in the modern world and becoming history itself.

Henry Howard (1769 – 1847) and Charles Robert Leslie (1794 – 1859), both painters and lecturers on art, each had a different view on the art market of the early 1840s. Howard was disappointed with the lack of public patronage and opted to abandon history painting to elevate genre painting. On the other hand, Leslie hoped for the reinvention of history painting to become more relevant to the popular demands. Brown's painting of King Lear and Cordelia, although

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[115] Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible,* 30 – 40.

highly praised by some reviews, remained unsold. Some art historians have associated the lack of

demand for expensive oil paintings with the lack of funds available due to economic depressions.

As the 1840s approached, Leslie commented on the surprising increase in demand for prints of

popular paintings instead of the actual works. Prints were more affordable and accessible for the

lower classes either barred financially from the elitist salons and exhibitions or lacked the funds

for a fantastic collection of famous artists. What this print popularity also shows was the growing

public disappointment in religious art.[116] Narrative genre painting, a category of painting lower in

the hierarchy to the others, represented the middle and lower classes by offering works reflective

of their lives and everyday scenery. Despite the gaining popularity of genre painting, Rossetti

chose to depict a religious subject.

Rossetti originally had planned on presenting his painting *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* at

the Royal Academy exhibition. Still, at the last minute, he decided to attend the Free Exhibition

with Brown. Unlike the other Brotherhood members and Brown, Rossetti chose to present his first

Brotherhood painting as a religious subject full of recognizable Christian iconography. His

description of his work illuminates his choice for the subject and inclusion of popular icons:

> It belongs to the religious class, which has always appeared to me the most adapted
> and the most worthy to interest the members of a Christian community. The subject
> is the education of the Blessed Virgin, one which has been treated at various times
> by Murillo and other painters,—but, as I cannot but think, in a very inadequate
> manner, since they have invariably represented her as reading from a book under
> the superintendence of her Mother, St. Anne, an occupation obviously incompatible
> with these times, and which could only pass muster if treated in a purely symbolical
> manner. In order, therefore, to attempt something more probable and at the same
> time less commonplace, I have represented the future Mother of Our Lord as
> occupied in embroidering a lily, —always under the direction of St. Anne; the

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[116] Two informative articles on the popularity of art prints and the Victorian art market are: Pamela Fletcher and Anne Helmreich, "The Periodical and the Art-Market: Investigating the "Dealer Critic System" in Victorian England," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 41, no. 4, Winter 2008, 323 – 351. Amy Woodson-Boulton, "'Industry without Art is Brutality': Aesthetic Ideology and Social Practice in Victorian Art Museums," *Journal of British Studies* 46, January 2007, 47 – 71. Martha Tadeschi, "'Where the Paintings Cannot Go, the Engravings Penetrate': Prints and the Victorian Art Market," *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 30, no. 1, 2005, 8 – 19, and 89 – 90.

flower she is copying being held by two little angels. At a large window (or rather aperture) in the background, her father, St. Joachim, is seen pruning a vine. There are various symbolic accessories which it is needless to describe.[117]

Interestingly, many of the reviews for Rossetti's *Girlhood of Mary Virgin* are relatively brief compared to those for Brown's painting. The reviews did not go into much detail about the technique or the iconography. Most mentions focused primarily on Rossetti's emulation of an early Christian style and the Virgin Mary's beauty. The *Builder* described Rossetti's painting as one of the most noticeable pictures in the gallery for the extraordinary minuteness and high tone of mind.[118] Rossetti used his sister as the Virgin's model, his mother as the Virgin's mother, and a family friend for the Virgin's father. The quote indicates his dedication to the realistic depiction of people, the truth to nature idea, and attention to historicity. It was not uncommon to use real people as models, but Rossetti represented them as realistically as possible rather than ideal perfect forms. As he mentioned in the quote above, he also chose to represent Mary embroidering rather than reading. It would not have been historically accurate to do so as many artists had done in the past – details that the critics noticed. Mostly positively received, the reviews focused primarily on Rossetti's technical rendering of the painting and less on the actual subject matter, which would later become the primary issue in Millais's depiction of Mary and Christ the following year.

The *Athenaeum* praised his work highly and believed it to be worthy of any exhibition had it been submitted elsewhere. While this review also mentioned the artist's immaturity, it did not relate this as a reason for Rossetti to choose a Florentine monastic style. The review praised Rossetti's ability to bring out art's earnestness and sincerity. This ability was what Brown was

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[117] Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Letter to Charles Lyell, November 14, 1848.
[118] "Review of the Association for Promoting the Free Exhibition of Modern Art Opening," *The Builder* March 31, 1849, 145.

accused of not having achieved in his attempt at emulating early Christian art.[119] However, the *Morning Chronicle* believed otherwise, saying that despite Rossetti's success at capturing the earnestness of an "early religious style," it was still "reprehensible for the blind idolatry of the imitation."[120] *Fraser's Magazine*, a general interest journal published in London between 1830 and 1882, took a more critical approach to the painting's short review. *Fraser's* described Rossetti as a "slave to style" for his choice to emulate early Christian art. Due to this, the review believed his drawing to be "grotesquely rigid." Yet, like the several other reviews of his painting and Brown's, he was credited with "unmistakable talent."[121]

For this research, the most crucial aspect of Rossetti's painting the reviews focused on was depicting the Virgin Mary. Regardless of the reviewers' opinions on Rossetti's decision to use antiquated styles, almost all the reviews agreed that Rossetti painted the Virgin Mary well. She was not considered ugly or inappropriately modeled. The *Athenaeum* described the Virgin Mary's depiction as thought to be "an achievement worthy of an older hand." *The Observer* called the Virgin "ineffably sweet" and the painting as a whole of "correspondent grace and beauty."[122] These were compliments that Millais would not receive for his later painting of the Virgin Mary and her family. According to many of the reviews, Rossetti's rendering of the Virgin seemed to capture early Christian art's essence. She was full of spirituality, as *Fraser's Magazine* stated. These brief comments on Rossetti's painting starkly contrast the treatment that Millais would receive in 1850 once the Brotherhood became and their mission became apparent to the public. In 1849, Rossetti and the other Brotherhood members displayed their paintings with the letters PRB instead of their names and received little to no adverse criticism. Hunt and

[119] "The Free Exhibition of Modern Art.," *Athenaeum* April 7, 1849, 362.
[120] "The Exhibition of Modern Art," *Morning Chronicle* March 26, 1849, 5.
[121] "The Fine Arts Exhibitions of 1849," *Fraser's Magazine* July 1849, 78.
[122] "Free Exhibition of Modern Art – No. 2, *Observer* April 8 – 9, 1849, 1.

Millais were reviewed several months later after the Free Exhibition when the Royal Academy Exhibition opened. The reviews for these two men were quite like the ones that described and critiqued Brown and Rossetti.

The Royal Academy 1849 Summer Exhibition

The choice to use "PRB" instead of their initials could have been a parody of the "ARA" or "RA" initials used in the Academy to denote rank within the institution. Regardless of these initials, Hunt and Millais were recognizable to the published reviews, and the reviews did not mention the mysterious signatures.[123] Instead, these 1849 reviews were mostly positive and praised the young artists just as the reviews about Brown and Rossetti. The comments are all strikingly similar and tend to have focused on many of the same aspects. The artists were also accused of naivety and being young. The young men were consistently critiqued for their decisions to emulate older styles of early Christian art. Overall, the reviews held a sense of professionalism and focused on artistic technicalities.

Hunt and Millais's paintings were hung in good positions within the Middle Room of the Academy. *Isabella* by Millais and Hunt's *Rienzi* were hung near each other, and some of the reviews, such as the *Athenaeum,* bundled the two artists together. The two artists would have been further pleased with their paintings' positions being "on the line," meaning that they were at optimal eye level for public viewing.[124] Their proximity made it easier for the reviewers to compare them and notice their similar choice in antiquated style. Despite the many paintings being

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[123] Sarah Victoria Turner, "1849 The Arrival of the PRB," *The Royal Academy Summer Exhibition: A Chronicle, 1769 – 2018.* Published Online, https://chronicle250.com/1849.

[124] Sarah Victoria Turner, "1849 The Arrival of the PRB,", https://chronicle250.com/1849. "on the line" meant that the 8ft high molding was considered the best position to view art works.

debuted and displayed at the Academy Exhibition, the two young artists stood out. They brought themselves mostly positive attention with much hope for their future careers.[125]

Figure 8: Sir John Everett Millais, *Isabella,* 1849.

[125] Sarah Turner, "1849 the Arrival of the PRB", Published Online, https://chronicle250.com/1849.

Figure 9: William Holman Hunt, *Rienzi vowing to obtain justice for the death of his young brother, slain in a skirmish between the Colonna and Orsini factions,* 1849.

The scene in Millais's *Isabella* was inspired by John Keats' story *Isabella, or the Pot of Basil* adapted from Boccaccio's *Decameron.* The story follows Isabella's plight, a wealthy young woman who was destined to marry a rich noble but instead fell in love with one of her brother's employees. The story was initially published in 1820, not long before Millais painted his scene. The exhibited painting shows that Isabella's brothers realized Lorenzo and their sister had romantic feelings towards one another. In response, they planned to murder him. In Millais's painting, the brothers and other figures sit at a table with Isabella. In the foreground are Isabella and a brother. The brother is kicking a tall greyhound dog into the lap of his sister. The family walls are covered in elaborate gold and light blue designs, creating a busy pattern. The busy pattern contrasts with the open blue sky on the right side of the painting.

Each of these precise details became characteristic of Brotherhood paintings. In comparison to Brown's painting of Cordelia, which resembles more Neo-Classical than "Medieval" traits, Millais's painting of Isabella and her brothers strongly resembles an older Florentine style. Although meticulously detailed, the figures are flat and seem like layered sheets of paper on top of one another rather than part of the same space. In addition to the detail and flatness, Millais chose to rid the painting of *chiaroscuro* lighting effects and purposefully distorted perspective. In doing so, Millais eliminated the stage-like view of Academy paintings while also taking away the perfectness of figures, lighting, and scenery.

Additionally, the painting lacks a compositional balance. The figures are not symmetrical such as in Brown's painting, and the viewer's eye does not follow any natural shapes, lines, or aesthetically pleasing curves. Millais also chose to add a "Medieval" stylistic element to the bench that Isabella is sitting on. The wooden bench features a carving of a kneeling person with the initials PRB instead of his name. This painting focused on representing an older style that predated Raphael's teachings and countered all that the Academy taught.

The beginning of the *Art Journal's* review of *Isabella*, shown in the Royal Academy exhibition of 1849, showered Millais with praise as a promising young artist who had already shown much talent and a glowing reputation. The *Art Journal* was a nineteenth-century publication focused mainly on the art world. The journal was published in London from 1839 to 1912. In 1850 it became known for its attacks on the Brotherhood and John Ruskin. However, this article, at the time unaware of the Brotherhood's purpose, was glowingly positive.[126] The author believed that the painting deserved as much recognition and praise as any preceding works that he had presented. Aware of Millais as a prodigy, the author made it a point to state right away in the review that the

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[126] George P. Landow, "*The Art Journal*, 1850 – 1880: Antiquarians, the Medieval Revival, and the Reception of Pre-Raphaelitism," *The Pre-Raphaelite Review* 2 1979, 71 – 76.

painting was as deserving of praise as any others prior. It was apparent that the painting was starkly different from his past works; it was a dedication to the early Florentine schools of art. "The picture differs in style from its predecessors since it is a pure aspiration in the feeling of the early Florentine school."[127] The reviewer further sang Millais's praise as a prodigy by stating that he achieved the perfection of imitating the Florentine School with such ease and precision that many that had labored a lifetime still could not achieve. Rossetti received similar praise for his painting of the Virgin. The review cited technical qualities of the painting that made it worthy of praise, such as the correct amount of shading, the opposition of colors, the composition of the figures, and the simplicity derived from the old painters "It cannot fail to establish the fame of the young painter." The various reviews reflected a primary concern with the Brotherhood's paintings' technical qualities rather than any concern with the subject matter.

Although *Fraser's Magazine* became an enemy of the Brotherhood later, the review of Millais was practically glowing. "Among the multitude of minor pictures at the Academy, nearly all of which are bound to say, exhibit more than an average degree of excellence, one stands out distinguished from the rest. It is the work of a young artist named Millais whose name we do not remember to have seen before." The color and vibrance of the details were praised, citing Millais as an evident genius. The reviewer did notice the antiquated style and the mannerist qualities of Isabella's elongated figure; however, the author believed that Millais's talent would break through these minor errors.[128] *The Examiner* expressed the same concerns with Millais's deficiency in form and figure. This review is found in an article that began by spurning the lackluster talent in the 1849 Royal Academy Exhibition. It expressed concern with the lack of established masters that had not presented that year. The "inferiority" of the exhibition was blamed primarily on the

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[127] *The Art Journal* 11, 1849, 171.
[128] "The Fine Arts Exhibition of 1849," *Frazer's Magazine* July 1849, 77.

collection presented. "There is a gaudy glare of colour in the *ensemble* bordering on the vulgar."

Despite the review's obvious disappointment with the exhibition, it praised Millais and Hunt for

their talents. The author praised his colors and Italian style but disappointed in the human figures

that borderline on a caricature style. "Apart from the Academy, too, the most gratifying feature in

the exhibition is the promise of several young artists, among whom Messrs. Millais and Hunt are

pre-eminently deserving of notice."[129]

Hunt entered a painting with a lengthy title *Rienzi Vowing to Obtain Justice for his Young

Brother, Slain in a Skirmish between the Colonna and the Orsini Factions*. Hunt's subject came

from the novel *Rienzi, the Last of the Roman Tribunes* by Bulwer Lytton. This novel followed the

events of a Roman politician from the fourteenth century. The following line from the novel

accompanied the painting:

> But for that event, the future liberator of Rome might have been but a dreamer, a
> scholar, a poet, - the peaceful rival of Petrarch - a man of thoughts, not deeds. But
> from that time, all his faculties, energies, fancies, genius, became concentrated to a
> single point and patriotism, before a vision, leaped into the life and vigour of a
> passion.[130]

In the foreground of the painting, soldiers kneel around a young man's body with flowing hair. He

is held upright by another young man who is gesturing to the sky with a fist and looking upwards

towards the heavens as he says a vow aloud. The background landscape features a hill with a

woman and children to the viewer's left and a medieval castle's towers to the right. The top of the

painting's horizon is taken up mostly with a methodically painted blue sky and clouds. The painting

figures are rendered with more roundness and are not flat like Millais's Florentine-inspired figures.

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[129] "Fine Arts. Eighty-First Exhibition of the Royal Academy," *The Examiner* May 12, 1849, 293.
[130] *Rienzi, the Last of the Roman Tribunes,* Book I, Chap. 1, 23.

Also, unlike Millais, Hunt focused more on the figures' emotions and connotations of this painting's actions.

Additionally, Hunt included a natural focal point for the viewer's eyes in which Millais's painting seems to lack. The raised fist is the center of the painting, and the viewer's eyes are additionally aided upwards with the weapons and intentional shapes within the painting. Although there are academic elements such as the composition, proper perspective, focal points, and shading, the figures' rendering makes this painting primarily pre-Raphaelite in style. Aside from the young brother's face, the painted figures, especially the woman and children in the background, lack idealistic body shape or face. Hunt painted the castle and the trees in the background in a manner that resembles pre-Renaissance foliage. The composition of this painting is a blend of Brown's *Cordelia* and Millais's *Isabella*. Hunt followed a Pre-Raphaelite style with the figures and background rendering, but they are not as detailed or flat as Millais's figures. Like Brown, the most academic quality of the painting is the actual composition itself since it is pleasing to the eye and balanced with a proper focal point and perspective.

The *Examiner* reviewed Millais's and Hunt's paintings and had many of the same comments to make. For example, like Millais's *Isabella,* the figures in Hunt's Rienzi were also considered deficient in grace and inaccurate. One critique stands out in this review that seemed to show that the reviewer had more academic knowledge than other reviews. The author specifically noted and described an issue with perspective: "But the most glaring defect is perhaps the jar against the harmony of composition occasioned by how Rienzi's uplifted arm comes into contact with the lines of the horseman behind."[131] This detailed comment shows knowledge for the proper artistic technique that surpassed other reviews. Still, it also shows that this review's biggest concern

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[131] "Fine Arts. Eighty-First Exhibition of the Royal Academy," *The Examiner* May 12, 1849, 293.

was related to composition and harmony. The reviewer praised Hunt's talent, but the reviews focused primarily on critiquing the artworks themselves.

Furthermore, like Brown and Hunt, the review believed their talents could only progress with age as "the beautiful and harmonious, which would appear by a law of nature to be the last faculty that fully develops itself in a truly great artist."[132] As I have demonstrated in this chapter, almost all the reviews blame their defects on age. From the choice to emulate outdated non-English art techniques to their naïve talent, the lack of experience in age could help reviews overlook the deficiencies in their paintings. It was unfathomable, and these young men would be intentionally trying to upset the art world and rebel against the Academy's teachings.

In 1849, it would have seemed that the Brotherhood had made a triumphant entrance into the art world with their new style. Despite the warnings in the reviews against their choice to emulate older Christian art, their paintings' reception was positive. The hanging committee's decision to place Hunt and Millais within eye-level viewing in the "Middle Room" of the Royal Exhibition showed a little acceptance for new talent. The art world was quickly changing in Victorian England, and these young men were promising talent. As shown in the sources of this chapter, the criticisms were not particularly fond of the blind idolatry, as several described it, but the consensus was generally positive. What was not yet apparent to the public was that the men intended to be rebellious against academic teachings. The staunchly negative critique would not come until the year after following the Brotherhood's publication of their manifesto in *The Germ*. None of the Brotherhood's paintings received the level of negative criticism that Millais would receive for his presentation of Christ in *Christ in the House of His Parents* despite sharing the Medievalist and antiquated qualities characteristics and features. The next chapter seeks to explore

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[132] "Fine Arts. Eighty-First Exhibition of the Royal Academy," *The Examiner* May 12, 1849, 293.

this paradox and explain the sudden adverse reaction to a Brotherhood painting when the year prior

did not show such evidence.

CHAPTER 3: MILLAIS'S *CHRIST IN THE HOUSE OF HIS PARENTS* IN A SPACE OF FEAR AND DOUBT

In 1850, following the Free Exhibition critiques and the publication of the Brotherhood's journal *The Germ*, John Everitt Millais presented a work of art that would cause a noticeable stir among periodical art critics: *Christ in the House of His Parents.* As this research has been building towards, Millais's creation and the exhibition of this painting are the culmination of significant changes occurring in the Victorian art world. The 1850s would prove to be a divisive moment for the Brotherhood and its challenge to Victorian sensibilities. All of that, as will be argued here, can be seen through the press's reaction to *Christ.*

It is not easy to imagine the Victorian era without prevailing terms such as religion, Protestantism, secularization, and modernization. These ideas were not only prevalent in the religious spheres of Victorian life and society, but they could be found frequently in academic and public discussions on art as well.[133] Ideas such as modernity, archaism, and religion particularly riddled the reviews of Millais's *Christ*. The critical tone in the press reviews for *Christ* reflects an uneasiness with viewers and how the religious subjects were depicted. In 1849 the press reviews for the Pre-Raphaelite artworks were primarily focused on the artistic qualities, consistently mentioning the use of archaic methods, youthful mistakes, and unpolished talent. Overall, the public generally accepted the new artworks as a fad. The paintings' reviews indicate the author's believed that the idealization of antiquated art would eventually fade from the rambunctious young artists.

The Brotherhood proved to the public that their new style was more than a fad with a periodical publication of their own. *The Germ* (1850) attempted to bring together artists, poets,

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[133] Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England*, 243.

and authors of like mind to be published together.[134] As an editor, Rossetti hoped it would inspire and grow creative ideas that stepped outside of the academic mold and upheld the idea of staying true to nature's representation. The name itself implied a seed planted to grow, or the "germ of an idea," each meant to symbolize the growth of imagination and creativity. The periodical only lasted four editions, January, February, March, and April, as it did not sell well. The last two issues were changed to the lengthy title: *Art and Poetry, being Thoughts towards Nature, Conducted Principally by Artists*. The name change intended to emphasize the relationship between literature, poetry, and art to show they were not exclusive. Although the publications did not sell many copies, the press made *The Germ*'s purpose well known.[135]

The most notable and concerning writing in *The Germ* was not a poem or short story, nor was it even a written lecture on the ideas of art and nature. The back page of *The Germ* featured the most concerning text for art critics and the followers of the Academic tradition.[136] This page contained what historians have deemed their "manifesto."[137]

> With a view to obtain the thoughts of Artists, upon Nature as evolved in Art […] this Periodical has been established. Thus, then, it is not open to the conflicting opinions of all who handle the brush and palette, nor is it restricted to actual practitioners; but is intended to enunciate the principles of those who, in the true

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[134] *The Late-Victorian Little Magazine* by Koenraad Claes features a detailed biographical section on the Pre-Raphaelite journal *The Germ*. Claes contended that *The Germ*, although unpopular at the time, was a major contributor to British art, poetry, and literature. *The Germ: Origins and Progenies of Pre-Raphaelite Interart Aesthetics* by Paola Spinozzi and Elisa Bizzotto shares a similar idea that *The Germ* was a foundation for art for the latter half of the nineteenth century. A good amount of the background information for this research derived from Claes's monograph, Spinozzi and Bizzotto, as well as from the online British Library where digital prints and a brief explanation of the journal can be found: "Pre-Raphaelite Journal, *The Germ*." British Library., https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/pre-raphaelite-journal-the-germ#.

[135] Koenraad Claes, *The Late-Victorian Little Magazine* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 22 – 23.

[136] Michaela Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible,* 98.

[137] Manifesto is shown in quotations since the following quote from the magazine was not a self-declared manifesto by the Brotherhood. It has been casually termed so in different texts relaying the history of the Brotherhood and *The Germ* since it was this statement that made clear their dedication to nature in poetry and art. Memoirs, letters, and other biographical texts from the members in conjunction with this statement from the back of *The Germ* have led to the historiographical consensus of this being called the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood's manifesto. George P. Landow, "Pre Raphaelites: An Introduction," *The Victorian Web: Literature, history, and culture in the age of Victoria*, http://www.victorianweb.org/painting/prb/1.html.

spirit of Art, enforce a rigid adherence to the simplicity of Nature either in Art or Poetry…[138]

Here, the men declared their dedication to creating art true to nature and depict their subjects as they appear. Their commitment to truth is opposed to the idealized nature of academic teaching. This statement of intent negated the previous reviews of their works. The artists declared their new style was intentional. With this declaration, it became apparent that the Brotherhood was more than a group of young naïve artists following trends. The Brotherhood intended to recruit more young and ambitious artists, authors, poets, and other intellectuals. To art critics, the Brotherhood was seen to be a threat towards the influence of younger artists.[139]

When the Brotherhood formed, debates about religious art, industrialization, science, and depictions of Christ were already underway and influenced public reaction to art. After the first issue of *The Germ,* deep-rooted fears on religion, art, and class began to manifest around the Brotherhood. These fears were apparent and solidified in the reviews following Millais's *Christ.* The Brotherhood and *Christ* both brought out anti-Catholic rhetoric that had already been brewing.[140] Additionally, the Victorian art world had already begun to reshape decades before. The 1840s called for further reform to meet the public and new artists' wants with a broader variety of teachings that stepped away from the traditional Reynoldian dogma. Conversations on Biblical criticism and historical accuracy had been ongoing since the beginning of the century.[141] The elite were no longer the only collectors and critics of art by the middle of the century. The highest within the hierarchy of High Art, history, and biblical painting were falling behind the popularity of

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[138] Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Germ: Thoughts towards Nature in Poetry, Literature, and Art.*, London, 1850.

[139] More detailed evidence for the public reception to *The Germ* is listed in Giebelhausen's notes on page 214. The notes consist of personal letters and memoirs from W. M. Rossetti, W. H. Hunt, and historians such as Herbert L. Sussman.

[140] General information on the discourses of Victorian religion can be found in the collection of essays *Victorian Religious Discourse: New Directions in Criticism*, ed. Jude Nixon, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

[141] *Art in Theory: 1815-1900, An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. Charles Harrison, Paul Wood, and Jason Gaiger, (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 1998), 12 – 14.

domestic genre painting, which the middle class preferred since it was more relatable.[142] High Art represented the morality and nationality of Victorian culture, particularly amongst the elite gentry. As briefly mentioned before in this research, Charles Lock Eastlake was a representation of everything Victorian religious art should have been. Eastlake painted several successful images from the Bible or biblical subjects praised by periodicals such as the *Art Union*.[143] His subjects, such as Christ, Ishmael, and Hagar, are not dressed in period-accurate clothing but still reflected a standard canon of representation that most religious works abided. *Hagar and Ishmael* and *Christ Blessing Little Children* painted in the 1830s show figures dressed in robes and dresses made of simple flowing fabrics. The figures themselves are a combination of the styles of Raphael and Titian. The figures are full and robust. The faces and limbs are free of any blemish, and the subjects' skin is radiant and glowing. The bodies are full of healthy life and show no physical weaknesses. The colors chosen to paint these images are subtle and soft, and the scenes are well balanced and harmonious. Overall, Eastlake's religious images were an example of what the ideal religious subject should look like.

If compared to paintings like Eastlake's, Millais's Christ was not on par with academic expectations. Strauss's biographical research on Jesus's life implied that Jesus was human, not divine. Millais's very human representations of Jesus and the Holy Family could only have added to this thought and crisis of faith. Jesus and the Holy Family were not idealized, venerated, or perfect, as a divine subject should be. The figures were flawed, blemished, realistic, and just as

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[142] Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible,* 29-32. Martha Tedeschi, ""Where the Picture Cannot Go, the Engravings Penetrate", 9 – 90.

[143] Giebelhausen uses Charles Eastlake as a comparative example to juxtapose Millais and artist Benjamin Robert Haydon. Haydon was an example of an artist's greatest fear- dying poor without patronage. Eastlake was well praised, and his art aligned with the academic ideal. I found that Charles Eastlake was a great comparison for contemporary comparison and used Giebelhausen's similar idea. I, however, took the comparison in a somewhat different direction by pushing more on the qualities of the painting and how they represented the ideal whereas Giebelhausen considered all aspects of how Eastlake's paintings and eclectic style were representative of British painting. This information can be found in pages 48 – 55 of *Painting the Bible*.

human as any of the reviewers and others who saw it.[144] Unlike Eastlake, Millais created an image of the Holy Family that offended most of the Victorian population. It went against Victorian norms of society, politics, religion, and modernization. The adverse reaction to the Brotherhood and Millais painting *Christ* sheds light on Victorian fears brought about by a quickly changing environment.

Figure 10: Charles Eastlake, *Hagar and Ishmael,* 1830.

Christ in the House of His Parents presented at the Royal Academy Exhibition in 1850

In the West Room of the Royal Academy 1850 exhibition, John Everett Millais displayed several paintings. One was a simple portrait of a man with his granddaughter. The other was a "Medieval"-style painting of Ferdinand and Ariel from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. The third,

Millais's now infamous painting, was listed number 518 without a title and accompanied by only a quote from the New Testament prefiguring the Crucifixion: "And one shall say unto him, what are these wounds in thine hands? Then shall he answer. Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."[145] The quote was appropriate for the painting as it described the scene perfectly.[146]

The scene is a plain messy carpenter's shop. Joseph is working on a wooden door with an assistant meant to symbolize the future apostles. In the foreground at the center of the painting is a plain-looking woman, Mary, the mother of Jesus, kneeling as she comforts a gangly red-headed Jesus. The young Jesus caught his hand on a nail that his grandmother Anne removes with pliers. This imagery prefigured the Crucifixion of Christ. To assist in washing the wound, a young curly-headed boy brings in a bowl of water, which prefigured the Baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. In the background are various objects with Christian meaning. There is a ladder hanging on the wall behind the family meant to represent Jacob's ladder and, on the ladder, sits a dove representing the Holy Spirit. There is a flock of sheep peering through the window in the background that represented the future followers of Christ. This painting depicts many essential and sacred Christian motifs that most would have recognized. The virtuous Christian audience would have customarily welcomed this story.

Religious subjects in art had recently been on a slight upward trend in the 1840s. In her monograph *Painting the Bible*, Giebelhausen put together several graphs to visualize the Victorian interests in religious paintings. Her research looked at painting titles in the many catalogs from the Royal Academy exhibitions. Her evidence included paintings with any religious connotation or

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[145] Zech. 13:6, King James translation.
[146] Most of the reviews on the *Christ* painting refer to it as the number it is listed by since it did not have a title at the time.

title, not just paintings entered in the biblical painting genre. The statistical observations showed a general lack of interest in religious-themed painting from 1825 to 1870, with a slight increase from 1835 through the 1840s. A second trend came to light during that decade, showing that Old Testament imagery dominated the first half of the 1840s, with New Testament imagery dominating the latter half.[147] Despite the upward trend for religious subjects, Millais's visual representation of the young Jesus and his family proved highly problematic for public and influential society, which included famed author Charles Dickens.[148]

Most, if not all, the issues that stemmed from *Christ* began with the issue of representation. The reviews of the Brotherhood's paintings in 1849, just a year before this exhibition, only warned the young men about emulating the past's imperfect archaic styles and encouraged them to realign themselves with the Reynoldian Post-Raphaelite techniques. Art critics described the "Medieval" figures as distorted, flat, and lacking grace. Reviewers noted jarring deficiencies in perspective and accuracy that took away from the artists' paintings' overall potential beauty. Yet, despite the negative commentary, most of the reviews were also positive. They exuded hope and promise for each artist to come to their senses and create art according to the proper standards. Although not entirely positive, the *Germ* criticism was not as aggressive as the reactions to *Christ,* despite the Brotherhood's rejection of the academic ideal and dedication to the art of nature.[149]

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[147]Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible*, 30 – 35.

[148] Millais was influenced, or at least inspired by a similar painting by Annibale Caracci titled *Our Savior Subject to His Parents at Nazareth*. The setting is different for both paintings; Millais's is set inside while Caracci's takes place outside. The details and placement of figures within the composition of each painting is similar. Both placed their figures centered around the workbench which created an oblong viewing of the painting. The setting, number of figures, and stylistic techniques used are the primary departures from Millais's and Caracci's paintings of Christ and his family. Due to the similarities and Millais departure from Caracci's painting, Millais can be understood as purposefully undermining the academic values and qualities that Caracci's painting represented. For more in depth reading on the matter, please see: Albert Boime, "Sources for Sir John Everett Millais's 'Christ in the House of His Parents'," *Gazette Des Beaux-Arts* May 1975, 71 – 84.

[149] Many of the reviews that were examined for this research were relatively neutral towards the magazine itself and tended to be more critical (positive and negative) on the actual contents of the journal. The reactions to the "manifesto" are not seen in the reviews of the journal but are surmised from the many other comments made in various other sources that relate to ideology that the passage put forth.

Rebelling against the Academic Ideal

The critics of the Brotherhood from the 1849 exhibitions focused on the artistic representations of the subjects. They used art terms and academic techniques to compare the paintings to the ideal models of art. Words such as Mannerism, Florentine, perspective, etc., were found in almost every review article. The reviews of *Christ* are strikingly different. Although the authors occasionally used academic criticism, it appears extraordinarily less often when compared to the ad-hominem, accusations, and negative opinionated statements from the reviewers. Instead of professional terms for artistic mistakes, the public encountered descriptions such as ugly, abhorred, heresy, sin, detested, and many other relatable words. Charles Dickens' review of *Christ* is one of the most notable examples.[150] Dickens described Millais's representation of Jesus as "a hideous, wry-necked, blubbering, red-headed boy, in a bed-gown." This critique is harsher and less academically rooted criticism than Millais received for *Isabella* in 1849. Dickens described Millais's figure of Mary as "horrible in her ugliness," "A monster, in the vilest cabaret in France." The review only briefly features Joseph and his assistant as half-naked drunkards seen in a hospital. The young boy with the water bowl was mentioned very briefly as the only figure with some humanity. The grandmother, Anne, was accused of having mistaken the carpentry shop for a tobacconist.[151] This passage by Dickens lacked academic criticism, but the commentary did come from academic teachings.

In an article, "Modern Moves in Art," artists and art historian Ralph N. Wornum (1812 – 1877) stressed that superior souls could not be inferred from the deformed, imperfect, or diseased body.[152] The Holy Family was the most important subject of all that was to be considered superior.

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[151] Charles Dickens, "Old Lamps for New Ones," 12-14.
[152] Ralph N. Wornum, "Modern Moves in Art," *Art Journal*, 1850, 270.

Dickens mentioned at least one figure from the painting to represent each of these blemishes. The men were diseased; Mary was deformed; and Jesus was imperfect. According to traditional teaching, this was the highest form of academic blasphemy an artist could commit in High Art.[153] Millais applied his aggressive realism to the holiest of subjects and turned an exalted subject into what looked like a domestic genre painting of the poor. In addition to Dickens' harsh words for the image of *Christ*, the influential author did not let the Royal Academy go without scathing. Dickens called on his readers, with obvious sarcastic disapproval, to praise the National Academy of Arts and its achievement for displaying the Pre-Raphaelite works that threatened their faith. The Royal Academy's unstable position in the fast-modernizing Victorian society was threatened by accepting the Brotherhood's paintings, particularly *Christ*. The Academicians had shown the public that it could not perform its role as the guardian of High Art and, in turn, the elite gentry's morality and sophisticated culture. The outdated Royal Academy was losing its grip on policing good and bad art to modern society's progress and change.[154]

The periodicals that vehemently criticized Millais's new painting of Christ and his family were the same magazines that reviewed his and the other members of the Brotherhood's paintings only one year prior. In 1849, Rossetti received minor backlash for his representation of the Virgin Mary in the antiquated "Medievalist" technique. A review from *The Observer* wrote, "It is admirable for its expression and for its composition rather than for its design or colouring – the one partaking of the hard manner of the period of Italian art…, the other being crude though not inharmonious."[155] Not every review was positive and some reviews called his idolatry of the older religious style immature. Still, they ultimately agreed that the 1849 Rossetti representation of the

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[153] This is seen in the language used in many of the reviews and based on Sir Joshua Reynold's *Discourses on Art* that were reinforced by the Royal Academy of Art's teachings.
[154] Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible*, 111 – 115.
[155] "Free Exhibition of Modern Art – No. 2," *The Observer Supplement,* April 8-9, 1849, 1.

Virgin Mary was sweet, finely conceived, and genuine.[156] Even the most negative reviews of Rossetti's religious subject in the *Morning Post* was far more concerned with how the artists' emulation of the old pre-Raphaelite religious art.[157]

The general language, tone, and negativity in the most scathing of reviews on Rossetti's Virgin Mary do not compare to that used in the criticism of Millais's *Christ* in many of the same periodicals in 1850.[158] For example, "Mr. Millais's principle painting (518)[159] is, to speak plainly, revolting."[160] The author in *The Morning Chronicle* wrote, "Mr. Millais is…, the most obtrusive sinner against all rules and laws of taste and art." The review called Millais's painting "indefensible." The reviewer demeaned Millais by repeatedly calling him childish, which, although similar in connotation, is more damaging than the previous 1849 accusations of naivety.[161] Naivety implied innocent ignorance due to youthfulness used to justify the Brotherhood's obsession with recreating antiquated art. As demonstrated earlier in this research, *The Germ,* and the explanation of the initials P.R.B. quickly abolished this idea of artist naivety. In 1849, the term "naïve" was used to describe the Brotherhood, but in 1850, after the public display of *Christ,* the term changed to "childish." Switching these words implied that Millais did not act like the mature and well-taught artist that critics and the public expected him to be. The reviewer and other art enthusiasts knew that as a student of the Academy, Millais had been taught the proper techniques for representing figures, and more importantly, the Holy Family. By choosing to go against these standards, the reviewer considered his rebellion a childish notion instead of a naïve mistake.

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[156] "The Exhibition of Modern Art," *The Morning Chronicle*, March 26, 1849, 5.
[157] "Free Exhibition of Modern Art," *The Morning Post*, March 28, 1849, 5.
[158] Here I use the term "general" to establish that I mean "common speech" used in the article, so that it is differentiated from the more precise "technical language" term that I elsewhere use.
[159] 155 was the catalog number for the painting.
[160] "The Exhibition of the Royal Academy: Third Notice," *The Times*, May 9, 1850, 5.
[161] See the previous chapter on the 1849 reviews of the Brotherhood and W.H. Hunt's paintings.

The anonymous periodical reviews followed the same type of pattern as Dickens's review of *Christ*. The artistic criticism of *Christ* lacked the same substantial art terms from those of 1849. Although the criticism was grounded in the academic ideal, the general language used to describe the painting and Millais as an artist was far more accusatory, incredibly less forgiving, and riddled with personal judgment. In comparison, especially to the milder way the reviewers handled Rossetti's religious subject in 1849, the reaction to *Christ* in 1850 was so extreme and unusual that it is a window into Victorian culture. This research examines religion, progress, modernity, society, and many more aspects of the era's culture through the reviewers' and public's reactions to Millais and the changing art world.

Commoners as Models and The Breakdown of Society

Critics accused Millais's *Christ* of being an attack on the highest of virtues and a sin. Millais, true to the way of the Brotherhood, took his models from nature and real life. He did not use professional models for his paintings, which is one of the factors that affected the reactions to *Christ*. Millais modeled Joseph's head his father and painted the body in the likeness of an actual carpenter. Millais captured the musculature, working stance, and roughness of an actual carpenter rather than an ideal man who looked like he had never seen hard work before. Millais likened the Virgin Mary to his sister-in-law, also named Mary.[162]

Interestingly, Millais's sister-in-law was also the model for Millais's previously debuted painting Isabella.[163] Critics did not describe Isabella as ugly as they did Christ despite it being the same model. The young John the Baptist was a young, adopted cousin of Millais, and the young

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[162] Frances Fowle, "Sir John Everett Millais, BT https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/millais-christ-in-the-house-of-his-parents-the-carpenters-shop-n03584. Albert Boime, "Sources for Sir John Everett Millais's 'Christ in the House of his Parents'", *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* May 1975, 79-80.

[163] John Guille Millais, *The Life and Letters of Sir John Everett Millais*, 78.

red-headed Christ was the son of one of the Millais' friends. According to Millais' son's reminiscence about the painting, there were no flocks local to Millais for him to model the sheep after.[164] A few days before Millais needed to send the painting to the Royal Academy, he purchased two sheep heads from the local butcher and used those as his models for the flock in the background of Christ.[165] In the *Discourses on Art,* Reynolds wrote, "The wish of the genuine painter must be more extensive, instead of endeavoring to amuse mankind with the minute neatness of his imitations, he must endeavor to improve them by the grandeur of his ideas."[166] Christ did not live up to Reynold's expectations. From the point of view of Reynolds, Millais was engaged in mere imitation when the art should have an act of transformation. Millais did not impress his audience with improved models that perfected the Holy Family's images, nor did he amaze viewers with a great imaginative idea. Christ was – to the reviewers – painfully true to the naturality of the space and subjects.[167] Millais modeled the Holy family in *Christ* after mere commoners and made it more offensive in all the minute details that a great artist should have ignored and perfected.

The class structure of Victorian society was not only strict but well respected amongst the social tiers. A working man that suddenly amassed a fortune would not buy a ticket for a first-class seat on a train but would instead sit in the proper car according to his social class. The elite gentry enjoyed the luxuries of life and had plenty of time to do so without the burden of working or raising families.[168] One's social class was evident in their imagined communities' rules that determined

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[164] John Guille Millais, The Life and Letters, 78.

[165] John Guille Millais, *The Life and Letters,* 78.

[166] "Discourse III: Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy, on the Distribution of the Prizes, December 14, 1770, 27.

[167] "The Royal Academy Exhibition," *Builder* June 1, 1850, 255 – 256.

[168] For general reading and guides to Victorian life and culture please consult the two monographs that most of the historical contextual for this research has been derived from: Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England,* Second ed. (Connecticut: Greenwood, 2008) And Kristine Hughes, *The Writer's Guide to Everyday Life and Regency in Victorian England, From 1811 – 1901* (Ohio: Writer's Digest Books, F & W Publications, Inc., 1998).

manners, speech, clothing, education, taste, and values.[169] The classes lived in different areas and followed different social customs. High Art had thought to be one of those cultural customs that would survive the progress and change of a fast-industrializing society.[170] Additionally, Dickens believed that there was a connection between social classes and figures in paintings. Unidealized depictions of subjects, such as Millais's figures in Christ, related to the dirty, diseased, poor working class.

Despite the Brotherhood's optimistic view of growth and industrialization, their work created fears of the transgression of academic ideals and cultural regression. Transgressive ideas threatened the elite's sensibilities, class structure, and overall way of life. Historian Daniel Wickberg stated that for Victorians, to have sensibilities was to be socially and artistically affluent and discern good and bad art. To lack sensibilities was to be a social idiot. The Victorian population extended the idea of sensibilities to the moral aspects of a refined person's character.[171] Therefore, only the Victorian elite could appreciate High Art that was not meant for the lower classes. Millais's *Christ* did not follow High Art's rules, and the Brotherhood was a self-proclaimed rebellious group of artists that stood against the Academy. In one year, the Brotherhood had become an enemy of Victorian upper-class society.

Each class rigorously followed its own social and cultural customs, values, and morals. One of the civic virtues of Victorian society was self-help. This virtue included mental and moral improvement; while this was interpreted differently according to class, self-help tied closely with another virtue. Respectability consisted of independence associated with self-help. It was essential to look after one-self and to bear misfortunes without complaint. It was shameful to ask for charity

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[169] Benedict Anderson explanation of imagined communities in
[170] Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible*, 103 – 105.
[171] Daniel Wickberg, "What is the History of Sensibilities: On Cultural Histories, Old and New," *American Historical Review*, June 2007, 666.

or help, and poverty, debt, and credit were all scorned. A social distinction was sometimes more important than class when it came to maintaining a respectable public reputation.[172] Millais represented the holiest of subjects without each of these virtues. The men were described as half-naked with varicose veins straight out of the leper colony hospital of St. Giles. The scenery is dirty and poor. Jesus looked weak and frail as he sought attention from his mother for his wounds. The lack of hygiene was considered immoral, and the Holy Family in *Christ* seems to lack cleanliness from the figures to the floor. Reviews indicate a perception that the Divine Family in *Christ* was a catalyst for the breakdown of Victorian society's moral culture. Instead of being revered with idealization, they represented any commoner family found at work.

The reviewers in multiple periodicals aligned their views with Dickens. Those reviewers believed the Holy Family to be ugly and against the laws of art. In a similar fashion as Dickens, the reviews touch little and lightly on the painting's theoretical values. Instead, the authors heavily focus on comparing the images to disease and poverty's lowly life. One of the few aesthetic qualities mentioned in *The Examiner* described Millais's Holy Family as the very "antithesis of nature, poetry, and art."[173] Only Simeon Stylites and the most loathsome of monkish aesthetics would appreciate the caricatured quality that Millais presented of the Holy Family.[174] The anonymous author wrote, "The figures are meagre in outline, awkward in attitude, hideous in expression, incarnations of physical disease."[175] Those two expressions of thought were the

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[172] Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England,* 261 – 265.

[173] "Fine Arts: Eighty-Second Exhibition of the Royal Academy (Concluding Notice)". *The Examiner* May 25, 1850, 326.

[174] Simeon Stylite or Symeon the son of a Turkish shepherd that lived sometime after 360 A.D. He converted to Christianity and became an ascetic monk. However, his extreme dedication to austerity made him unsuitable for monastery life and he later became well known for living over 30 years atop a small ledge of a pillar near Aleppo. The author of this article attempted to make a very strong point by associating Millais's painting of the Holy Family with the symbolic figure for austerity.

[175] "Fine Arts: Eighty-Second Exhibition of the Royal Academy (Concluding Notice)," *The Examiner* May 25, 1850, 326.

beginning and end in that review of academic or artistic criticism. The rest of the paragraph in *The Examiner* dedicated to Millais's *Christ* reflected the moralistic problems that the painting presented. Millais gave the Virgin and Christ attributes of filth and squalor experienced by the darkest of the middle ages. Dirty petticoats, vermin living in a woman's locks, and willful vulgarity; these were all harsh words with which the author closed his review on Millais's *Christ*.[176] According to the Reynoldian doctrine and Dickens's expressions, high art did not show squalor and suffering in the manner that Millais did. Misery and poverty were only moral qualities if associated with the Victorian Civic virtues like hard work, respectability, and self-help. Dickens and other authors expressed disdain for the Holy Family being represented as lowly, diseased, and dirty people since these attributes represented an antithesis of academic and social ideals. Millais likened the figures to prostitutes or diseased hospital members in Dickens' view, but the models themselves were personally related to Millais.

Aside from Dickens writings, *Punch* (1841-2002) magazine was one of the most scathing reviews that likened Millais' figures with dirt and disease.

> Their emaciated bodies, their shrunken legs, and tumid ancles, are the well-known characteristics of that morbid state of system. The incipient œdema of the lower extremities is faithfully portrayed; though in connection with this symptom, which indicates far-gone disease, the abdominal tension might have been more strongly marked. The boy, advancing with the bowl of water, exemplifies a splendid case of rhachitis, or rickets; and the osteological distortions of his frame have been correctly copied from the skeleton. The child in the centre is expressively represented with the red hair, light eyebrows, and mottled complexion, which betoken the extreme of struma. The female figure kissing it, apparently its mother, is endowed by the artist with the same peculiarities, in accordance with the laws of hereditary transmission. With a nice discernment, too, the squalid filth for which the whole group is remarkable, is associated with a disorder notoriously connected with dirt.[177]

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[176] "Fine Arts: Eighty-Second Exhibition of the Royal Academy," 326.
[177] "Pathological Exhibition at the Royal Academy (Noticed by our Surgical Advisor)," *Punch* May 19, 1850, 198.

Named for the comedy puppet, Punch magazine was a comical magazine that published caricature commentaries on the times' events.[178] Unlike other satirical British magazines, the editors insisted that *Punch* be less bitter and higher standards. Since the magazine was a satirical and comedic lens on popular happenings, the language was more dramatic than the average periodical. Dramatic tone is seen in the discussion on Millais's *Christ*. Yet, despite knowing the magazine's knack for over-the-top satire, the review's general language is still very scathing and extreme. The author of this article Besides the colorful use of negative adjectives and specifically named diseases, the author uses the pronoun "it" to reference the young Jesus. The author used the ambiguous "it" rather than "him" or "his" to reference Jesus to objectify him rather than recognize him as a human figure as if he were a monstrous creation. Artist and Art historian Ralph Wornum (1812 – 1877) liked the same sentiment in his connection with the Brotherhood studio and Dr. Frankenstein's lab. "Morbid Anatomy" were words used by both Wornum and the *Punch* review: "To render the phenomena of morbid anatomy is the specialty of the artist."[179] In *Modern Moves in Art,* Wornum wrote:

> When painting is the mere handmaid to morbid anatomy, its path is clear and its duties fixed; it is then no longer Art, but an administrator to science, and it is without the pale of artistic criticism; but so long as painting is employed as a Art, its duty is to instruct and delight, certainly not to disgust.[180]

Wornum's few sentences best describe the treatment of Millais's *Christ* in the press in several ways. First, the use of similar terminology as "morbid anatomy," as mentioned above. Wornum and *Punch* both described the figures of Pre-Raphaelite art in pathologic terms. These authors described the figures in disease-related terminology to fully polarize them against the academic ideal. The other important note to take away from Wornum's words above is that as long as these

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[178] Koenraad Claes, *The late-Victorian Little Magazine,* 21.
[179] "Pathological Exhibition at the Royal Academy," 198.
[180] Ralph Wornum, "Modern Moves in Art," 171.

artists, like Millais, continued to enforce the realistic manner, they painted their subjects. The paintings were only useful for science and could no longer be considered art. Thus, the artworks were no longer within the bounds of artistic criticism. Wornum's statement above helped explain one of the many reasons Millais's Christ lacked the academic terminology and criticism prominent with all other art reviews. Millais had strayed from the boundaries of art and art criticism and put his work on display for all criticism that did not need to stay within artistic boundaries since *Christ* was not a genuinely artistic painting.

The ugliness, deformity, and diseased figures, as the reviews claimed, were the primary concern for many of the reviewers in the press. Reynold's *Discourses on Art* said, "The most beautiful forms have something about them like weakness, minuteness, or imperfection. But it is not every eye that perceives these blemishes."[181] Reynolds explained that any well-trained artist painting in "the great style" should be able to laboriously study their subject to discern the perfect from the imperfect.[182] Not only was the imperfect perceived as aesthetically unpleasant, but his ugliness also represented the worst parts of society, the lowliest of classes, and the degradation of morals and values. Dirtiness, disease, and poverty were opposites of Victorian morality for all levels of society. The magazine *Punch* and Dickens both likened the Royal Academy's acceptance of Millais's painting to the monstrosities of popular sensationalist entertainment. The perceived blemishes and imperfections in Millais's figures were compared to the public shows that displayed deformities for curiosity and entertainment. Dickens believed that if the Academy continued to promote such work, then art would be reduced to an economy of street art.[183]

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[181] Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourse III,* 31.
[182] Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourse III,* 31.
[183] Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible*, 107.

Furthermore, representing the Holy Family or any other revered subject was to degrade them and sin with blasphemy in some cases. There were cases, as Wornum described, that disease or despair was acceptable to portray; however, these instances still followed by academic ideals and were only used to lend meaning to the moral teachings of the artwork: "No exalted sentiment can possibly be aided by either ugliness or disease; it is true that there are certain physical conditions that are admitted to be antagonistic to certain moral conditions…"[184] Millais's *Christ* was not an example of one of those cases since he willfully chose to represent the Holy Family in the most realistic of ways by copying the minute details on the selected models for *Christ*. Additionally, Millais degraded the Victorian ideal of a family life. The ideal image of the Victorian home was a loving and close family of several generations living in harmony under one roof. Themes of the Holy Family, in literature and art, represented the family life that Victorians hoped to embody. When Millais presented *Christ*, it unsettled that ideal within Victorian minds. The expressions on the faces of each family member are somber and lack the caring and kind gazes one would expect to find in a domestic scene. Millais's *Christ* pushed the limits for representation of the Holy Family as well as the ideal domestic scene, all which aided in the negative reactions by Dickens and the press.[185]

Holy Subjects and the Crisis of Faith

As discussed in previous chapters, the Royal Academy's creation helped shape the idea of "Englishness." For Britain to have an established school of art like the Italian schools and the French salon, the nation could officially be on par with - and even rival - the world's other cultural greats. The Royal Academy was the house and protector for British high culture and art. Academic

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[184] Ralph N. Wornum, "Modern Moves in Art", 171.
[185] Boime, "Sources for Sir John Everett Milliness's "Christ in the House of His Parents," 81 – 82.

ideals of art, based on the great masters and established by Reynolds, represented Victorian nationality. It was deeply rooted in Protestantism and an anti-Catholic sentiment related to the "Irish Problem."[186] The Brotherhood's breakthrough exacerbated significant literature and historical events into the realm of religious artwork. More than Millais's representation of commoners, imperfect models, and the ugly and diseased, in the eyes of the public, *Christ* became a symbol for the complete antithesis of all that was British, all that was progress, and all that was religious. Some historians claim the "crisis of faith" in the latter half of the nineteenth century began with exploring Bible representation and literal truths. Publications such as the German *Das Leben Jesu, bearbeitet* by German philosopher and theologian David Fredrich Strauss (1808 – 1974) in 1835 questioned the life of Jesus.[187] Public figures and court rulings suddenly favored Catholicism, and with the creation of the Brotherhood, art was no longer held sacred and under the protection of the National Royal Academy. Millais's *Christ* became the spark for the building religious doubt that had already loomed over the mid-Victorian intellectual.

Scientific discoveries led other areas of Victorian life to be scrutinized and studied, such as the historicity of Jesus. The first significant study of Jesus is said to have been Strauss's look into the life of Jesus and the Gospels. Ultimately, Strauss concluded that the Bible should not be read as literal truth. The life of Jesus was a series of historical myths representing the primitive Christian Community's widespread hopes and ideas.[188] With this publication, Strauss unofficially began searching for future generations of intellectuals and artists for the "historical Christ." The importance of historicity in art was a debated subject since Reynold's life. Artist Henry Howard (1769 – 1847) reluctantly, for the sake of historical truth, conceded to the argument that an artist

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[186] Nixon, *Discourses,* 1 – 4.
[187] Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible,* 129.
[188] Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible*, 128 – 129.

should be familiar with the correct details of the past to represent the scene and subject well historically. Other artists, such as the Swiss painter Henry Fuseli (1741-1825), believed that religious art belonged to dramatic or epic categories making the genre free from historical accuracy restraints.[189] Historicity in art was already a topic of debate amongst artists; however, the Holy Family's classic representations remained conservative for the first half of the century.

One of the very few positive reviews was in *The Guardian*. This assessment of *Christ* highlighted an interesting note about the scripture Millais chose to paint. The author claims that the subject he chose, an event in Jesus's childhood, would not have been recognized or familiar to the masses, and maybe even some of the more educated. The author claims that the reason for this was the doubt that many placed on that book of the Bible. The author harkened back to the early intellectuals of the books of the Bible, noting that the doubt was already an established concern amongst Christian scholars, "Jerome and other early commentators understand it to have reference to a false prophet, and not to the Messiah."[190] Despite the author's comment on the rare scene of Jesus's life, the scene was not new to art. Artist J. R. Herbert painted a scene of Jesus carrying a basket while Joseph worked on a wood project and Mary watched over. There are two stark differences between the paintings that exemplify why popular tastes rejected Millais but not Herbert's, who represented a new, more historical version of religious painting. The first difference is the cleanliness of Herbert's carpenters' shop. The wood that Jesus is walking to pick up is piled neatly at the painting's front center. Millais's carpenter's shop floor is covered in wood shavings, and wood is piled in the background without any sense of organization.

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189 Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible*, 20 – 30.
190 "Music and Fine Arts.," *The Guardian* June 1, 1850, 396.

Figure 11: John Rogers Herbert, *Our Savior, Subject to His Parents at Nazareth (The Youth of Our Lord),* 1847.

The second difference is the rendering of the figures. Herbert's Mary, Jesus, and Joseph are idealized, beautiful, and full. The concept of "truth to nature" in the Brotherhood is expressed in Millais *Christ.* The Holy Family's realistic representation is more noticeable and realized when compared to idealized paintings such as Herbert's.[191] Despite successful paintings that rendered the Holy Family with historical accuracy, painting figures with realistic natural accuracy was still not acceptable. Millais's natural representation of the Holy Family combined with the Brotherhood's perceived association with Catholic revivalism heightened the polarized opinions and research that surrounded the Bible's accuracy. The various reviews of *Christ* express religious doubt contain religious terminology and speak on Catholic threats plainly and subtly. The authors did not concern themselves solely with the painting's artistic qualities. Most of the concern shifted

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[191] Paul Barlow, *Time Present and Time Past*, 16 – 18.

to what the painting meant for the morals and values associated with High Art and how these translated into the social, cultural, and most importantly, religious spheres of mid - Victorian life.

Many of the periodicals used religious terms such as "blasphemy" when discussing Millais's *Christ* painting.[192] The *Athenaeum* wrote, "There are many to whom this work will seem a pictorial blasphemy."[193] *The Morning Chronicle* reported that out of the two artists Hunt and Millais, the latter was the most "obtrusive sinner" against laws of taste and art.[194] The periodical authors intertwined emotional religious language with art terms and definitions that strengthening the perceived bond between religion and art. Millais and The Brotherhood were positioned within the preexisting argument that concerned the proper depiction of historical subjects and the Holy Family.[195] The accuracy of the figures' anatomies in the painting adds to its nuance being a real-time and space within history; Jesus and the Holy Family were not unapproachable idols to worship and idolize. Still, Millais painted the family as real people within an actual workshop situated in real-time in history. The moral message, story, or the lesson that these elevated genres of paintings were teaching was the most critical quality. Millais did not use the proper techniques to achieve the morality necessary for the biblical story. The aggressive realism and approach to the quality of historicity were, according to several reviewers, blasphemous and sinful.

Through Millais's art, he had made himself -and The Brotherhood - sinners against art and religion. *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* went further than merely using religious terms such as "blasphemy" and "sinner." The author of this review used more obvious religious terminology and associations. The unnamed author likened the Brotherhood to other enthusiasts and claimed that the young men, such as Millais with *Christ*, compared themselves to "martyrs." This review also

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[192] "Fine Arts," *The Examiner*, 326.
[193] "The Royal Academy Exhibition Notice," *Athenaeum*, June 1, 1850, 590 – 591.
[194] "The Exhibition," *Morning Chronicle,* 5.
[195] Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible,* 102.

took the argument for the Holy Family's diseased, ugly, and deformed figures one step further by openly explaining how it was offensive to the Holy Family:

> The "Virgin" of Murillo is a Spanish peasant girl in her ordinary garb; but what a light of divinity illuminates that face! Love, tenderness, veneration, beams from it, till, Protestants as we are, we look on the worshipping mother as but little lower than the worshipped Son. Mr. Millais gropes in lanes and alleys till he finds a whining, sickly woman, with a red-haired, ricketty bantling, transfers them with disgusting fidelity to his canvas, and tells us that is the representation of all that awakens our holiest, purest, and most reverential sympathies.[196]

If the other reviews implied it, this author unapologetically accused Millais of blasphemy because he rendered Mary and Jesus. Highly emotive language and tone such as this and other reviews solidified the religious connections between Protestantism, blanket Christianity, and the world of High Art.

The Reformation, Anti-Catholicism, and the "Irish Problem" in Christ

Early Christian painting, before Raphael, represented a dark time for Christians under the rule of what Victorians termed "Papal Aggression." The purposeful regression in High Art, especially seen in Millais's *Christ,* threatened all that the Reformation had achieved for English Protestants.[197] The Nineteenth century ushered in many religious changes in Victorian life. In the words of the press and Protestant Victorians' minds, *Christ* and the Brotherhood aligned themselves with groups that sought Catholic reform.[198] "Medieval" revivalism in art meant Catholic revivalism in society. "Medieval" revivalism also suggested regression from progress and modernity. The Reformation and modernity linked to Catholicism's shift to Protestantism, such as

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[196] "The Royal Academy - May Exhibition," *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* June 17, 1850, 356-357.

[197] Barlow, *Time Present and Time Past,* 9-11. Wendy Graham, *Critics, Coteries, and Pre-Raphaelite Celebrity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017); 6-16. Dominic Janes, *Victorian Reformation: The Fight over Idolatry in the Church of England 1840 – 1860* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 43.

[198] Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible,* 88 – 89.

childhood to adulthood, passive worship to active participation, and "Medieval" to modern.[199] The "Irish Problem" and Anti-Catholicism were already a concern by the time Christ was presented to the public, and the Brotherhood had begun printing *The Germ.* National Finances, court rulings, and influential persons conversions shook the many various aspects of Protestant Victorian life outside of strictly religious sectors. What it meant to be English was being reshaped by progress in technology, science, and - with much opposition - religious reformation.

Protestant distrust of Catholicism can be traced back to the English and Irish Reforms under King Henry VIII (1509 – 1547). Victorian fears of Catholicism, put simply, stemmed from the power that the Pope sought over religious, spiritual, and secular forces, often in alliance with France or Spain. With the aid of Martin Luther and King Henry's wish to divorce Catherine of Aragon, the rise of Protestantism in England began. Aside from papal fear, Protestants and Catholics disagreed with fundamental views on worship, the Eucharist, prayer, and flamboyant aesthetics. Essentially, to prevent the Pope or a similar authority, Protestants centered their beliefs around personal and congressional relationships with their faith and removed all elaborateness. Icons were removed, images were simplified or removed, clergy and priests wore plain robes, and some altars were replaced with simple wooden tables. By the end of the seventeenth-century, Catholicism was strongly associated with ideas such as extravagance and absolutism. Hierarchical communion with God was one reason why Catholics could not hold office and why a monarch could not marry a Catholic.[200]

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[199] Miriam Elizabeth Burstein, *Victorian Reformations: Historical Fiction and Religious Controversy, 1820 – 1900* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), 37.

[200] This section is a culmination of research from Giebelhausen's *Painting the Bible.* Burstein's *Victorian Reformation.* Janes's *Victorian Reformation.* Hugh's *Everyday Life in Regency and Victorian and Victorian England.* Alstair Armstrong, *European Reformation: 1500–1610 (Heinemann Advanced History): 1500–55,* (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 2002). R.W. Linker, "The English Roman Catholics and Emancipation: The Politics of Persuasion", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 27, No. 2 April 1976, 151 – 180. Jan-Melissa Schramm, *Censorship and the Representation of the Sacred in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

The Victorian "Catholic question" was strongly associated with the "Irish question." By the middle of the nineteenth century, there were three distinct groups of Catholics in England. The first was the new converts. These consisted of intellectuals and those that the aesthetics and fundamentals of Catholicism attracted. The second group consisted of long-term Catholics. These were typically aristocratic families that never accepted the Protestant Reformation. The third and largest group of Catholicism were the Irish Immigrants that had migrated due to famine. A common belief about Catholics was that they were either an ignorant, superstitious Irishman or an over-refined, over-educated aesthete.[201] In the 1500s, the foreign threat to Englishness was the association of Catholicism with Spain and France, the enemies of the time. In Victorian England, the foreign enemy against the English Protestant had become the Irishman. Historian Jude Nixon on the subject wrote:

> Important to that ideology of Englishness was the cultivation of "Distrust, even hatred, of papist and the papacy," according to Richard Helmstadter. "In the nineteenth-century, anti-Catholicism was closely bound up with the Irish question, as well as with the tendency of Protestant Britons of all political parties and all denominations to identify their anti-Catholic venom with a self-satisfied celebration of British liberty.[202]

In 1801, William Pitt the Younger became the first Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland when the two united under the Acts of Union 1800. Catholic Emancipation shifts in British society and for the Irish Catholic majority. In Ireland, Protestantism was considered the official religion, despite a Catholic majority. Therefore, when England began reforms in favor of Catholicism, the Irish Roman Catholics became an increasing threat to Protestantism. Roman Catholics were barred from seats of authority and power since the Protestant Reformation. Historically King Louis XIV and King James II had instilled a fear of Catholic power

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[201] Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life,* 249.
[202] Jude Nixon, "Framing Victorian Religious Discourse: An Introduction," 1.

and control with the idea of Divine Right. Englishmen were fearful of any Roman Catholic holding power.

At the beginning of the century, a wave of reforms took place that lessened or removed restraints such as the Act of Uniformity, the Test Acts, and penal laws on Catholics. Most of the restrictions involved holding any government office and other attempts at forcing Roman and Irish Catholics and other dissenters to accept the established Church of England in both England and Ireland. The English Protestants had begun to lose total grip on British life's authoritarian aspects and Ireland. The Sacramental Test Act allowed for non-conformist Christians to hold legal authority. The argument was that by allowing Christians of all sects, whether they accepted the Thirty-Nine Articles or not, the act would safeguard the Church of England. Instead of having individuals falsely accept the Articles for purely secular ends, English Protestants could ensure that, at minimum, a true Christian would hold authority.[203] Prime Minister William Pitt supported complete Catholic emancipation in opposition to King George III, former King of England and newly appointed King of United England and Ireland. In response to the antagonism, the Irish formed a league of their own and elected Daniel O'Connell as their representative, political leader of the Irish Roman Catholic majority, known at the time as "The Liberator." He could not take his seat in The House of Commons in 1828 due to the restrictions but could do so in 1829 due to Catholic Emancipation. Catholic Emancipation of 1829 lifted many of the remaining barriers for Catholics and was a significant moment for Catholics in England and Ireland.[204] However, to the upper-class Victorian mind, this was the beginning of a significant threat towards the security of

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[203] Mitchell, *Daily Life*, 244.

[204] Elsie B. Michie "On the Sacramental Test Act, the Catholic Relief Act, the Slavery Abolition Act, and the Factory Act." BRANCH: Britain, Representation and Nineteenth-Century History. ed. Dino Franco Felluga. Extension of Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net. http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=elsie-b-michie-on-the-sacramental-test-act-the-catholic-relief-act-the-slavery-abolition-act-and-the-factory-act

Protestantism in England, English identity, and a threat to progress and modernity. Evidence is in the rise and reaction of the Ultra-Tories, an extreme right-wing faction that opposed all Catholic and Irish emancipation. In response to the Relief Act of 1929, the Sixth Duke of Marlborough brought forth a reform in 1830 that would disenfranchise non-resident voters and dissolve rotten boroughs that were be divided amongst larger towns. Marlborough believed that in doing so, the distribution of votes would reflect an anti-Catholic majority to inhibit any future Catholic reforms in government.[205] Despite many of the positive changes towards reform for Catholics and Irish Catholics, anti-Catholicism remained in government and reemerged in various areas of Victorian society. The Brotherhood was one of the major provocations that brought out much of the anti-Catholic rhetoric that emerged in the middle of the century through the pages of the printed press.

Some of the reviews about Millais's *Christ* contain a conscious and sub-conscious anti-Catholic rhetoric and vigorous defense of English Protestant identity. For example, an article about the Brotherhood titled "The Royal Academy" in the *Athenaeum* used words such as "Art-Idol" and "ostentatious." The author felt that it was their obligation to steer readers away from the seduction of eccentricities for fear that the Brotherhood would acquire followers and admirers due to its strangeness. The author wrote that the young artists were going back to an absurd "revival."[206] The words art-idol are reminiscent of the Protestant dislike of Roman Catholic idols and images. Just as well, the use of "Ostentatious" are derived from the Protestant disapproval of gaudy, excessive Roman Catholic decoration, and the elaborate aesthetics of congressional worship. An earlier "revival," although it pertains to revivals in art, is still a shadow of the terminology floating around the ideas of a Catholic revival in the early nineteenth century. In 1836, the Marriage Act allowed

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[205]Eric. J Evans, *The Forging of the Modern State: Early Industrial Britain, 1783 – 1870.* Sec. Ed. Foundations of Modern Britain (New York: Longman, 1996), 215 – 216.
[206] "The Royal Academy.," *Athenaeum*, 590-591.

for Jewish, Quaker, and Roman Catholic services that previously were banned. Before the act, these services had to be held as Anglican ceremonies. Although most other religions, aside from Roman Catholics, were left relatively on their own and free to worship, alterative sentiments still existed.[207] *The Builder* presented an article in response to Millais's *Christ* that made it a point to describe the rendering of Jesus as "youthful Saviour as a red-headed Jew boy."[208] Despite the inclusion of other dissenters and non-conformists, the Anti-Catholic sentiment remained the strongest throughout the Victorian early and mid-century.

In 1845, a controversy surrounding a Catholic seminary sparked more anti-Catholic and anti-Irish feelings. From 1809 – 1845, the British government allotted a cash grant to St. Patrick's College in Maynooth, the Catholic seminary in Ireland. In 1845 however, the government increased the funding from an annual £8,000 to £26,000 with an additional 30,000£ for repairs.[209] This event was a significant political and national financial support for Roman Catholics and an Irish Roman Catholic seminary. English Protestants had more reason to fear an overhaul of Catholicism when a notable Protestant Priest converted to the Catholic Church. John Henry Newman (1801 - 1890) was drawn to Anglicanism and became a leader in the Oxford Movement. Members of this movement were High Church clergy that wanted the Church of England to return to the pre-Reformation Church of England that supported public worship, the eucharist, and intercessory prayer. Newman was well known for his commentary on the Thirty-Nine Articles titled *Tract XC* (1841).[210] Newman was one of many members of the Oxford Movement that fully

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207 Mitchell, *Daily Life,* 244.
208 "The Royal Academy Exhibition." *Builder*, 255 – 256.
209 Donal Kerr, "Peel and the Political Involvement of the Priests, *Archivium Hibernicum* 36, 1981, 16. Anthony S. Wohl, "The Maynooth Grant", *The Victorian Web: literature, history, & culture in the age of Victoria*, http://www.victorianweb.org/religion/Maynooth_Grant.html.
210 Burstein, *Victorian Reformations,* 12 – 13.

converted to Catholicism in the 1840s. He was accepted into the Catholic fold in 1845 and later ordained as a priest in 1854 and after a full Cardinal in 1879.[211]

Catholic reforms fueled the Oxford Movement and men like Newman. They encouraged Catholic clergy to take over the Church of England from within. Only a few years later, the 1847 Graham controversy took place.[212] George Cornelius Graham (1787 – 1857) was a vicar in the Church of England. He was most well-known for his controversial views on baptism. In particular, he believed that infant baptism did not mean they were a child of God or a member of Christ's church. He thought baptismal regeneration was not all-forgiving and accepting but was instead conditional and dependent upon the individual's promises made to God. Due to this belief, he was denied a spot in a parish church dedicated to St. Peter. The Bishop of the parish decided that his baptismal ideas were too Calvinistic. In response, Graham appealed to the ecclesiastical Court of Arches, but they upheld the Bishop's decision. Unsatisfied, Graham took his case to a secular court and appealed to the Judicial Committee of Privy Council. The court reversed the Bishop's decision and granted Graham the post on 9 March 1850.[213]

For the art sphere in Victorian society, the German Nazarene painters also presented a Catholic threat. The Brotherhood being associated with the Nazarenes further added to the threat that they would promote Catholicism within Victorian art and society. The men's monastic lifestyle was proof enough to the public; they wore robes, grew their hair long, and parted it down the middle as they believed Raphael and Christ had done.[214] The members of the group also became staunch German nationalists along with being devoted Catholics. The group revived large

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[211] Robert H. Ellison, "John Henry Newman: A Brief Biography," *The Victorian Web: literature, history, & culture in the age of Victoria*, http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/newman/jhnbio2.html

[212] Mitchell, *Daily Life,* 246.

[213] Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, *Gorham v. Bishop Exeter: The Judgement of the Judicial Committee of Privy Council, Delivered March 8, 1850, Reversing the Decision of Sir H. J. Fust* (London: Seeleys, 1850), 2 – 16.

[214] Winter, "German Fresco Painting," 300.

fresco painting like that of Giotto and Raphael and sought to make it a German national form of art. The Nazarene brotherhood began their feat with a commission in 1816 with a biblically themed fresco to adorn the private residence of Prussian consul-general Jacob Salomon Bartholdy. Further commissions awarded the Nazarene brotherhood, and their fresco work was noticed by King Ludwig I of Bavaria. Ludwig's assistance to the Nazarene brotherhood revived and elevated frescos and brought the style back to its former perfection.[215]

Ludwig I's public patronage of arts in Bavaria aided in creating a grand center for public modern art. Britain, on the other hand, largely lacked any sort of official patronage like that in Bavaria. Winter writes that this is most likely due to the deep-rooted fears of Catholicism and absolutism associated with idolatry that began during the Reformation. Paintings and commissions rarely adorned public or government spaces. With the lack of public and patronage, British artists were at the mercy of Victorian society and their tastes for subject matter and style. Much of this discussed in the previous paragraphs assists to explain the Victorian reaction to the resurgence of German Nazarene influences within the Brotherhood and later with the new Westminster project. The original houses of Parliament burned in a historically devastating fire in Fall of 1834. In 1841, building of the new palace of Westminster had progressed to stages of planning interior decoration. A specialized committee was formed to plan and execute the interior decoration. Notable and important influences and members of this committee included Peter Cornelius[216], Eastlake, and William Dyce[217].

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[215] Winter, "German Fresco Painting," 301.

[216] Born in Dusseldorf in 1783 (death in 1867). Peter von Cornelius was a German painter and primary member of the German Nazarenes. He worked closely with the committee to assist in the mural frescos within the new Westminster palace.

[217] William Dyce (1806 – 1864) was a Scottish born artist that promoted public art patronage, public art education, and worked closely with the Pre-Raphaelites as well as on the new Westminster interior decoration. He was a strong advocate for public patronage that was modeled after Ludwig I of Bavaria.

To the public's surprise, as mentioned previously in this research, the committee modeled the process of designing the Westminster interior off King Ludwig I's example of public patronage. This unheard-of notion was not only shocking due to it being a new concept, but Victorian England did not have an established history with Bavarian Germany. Political, Social, and even artistic relationships with Germany typically were with Northern Germany. The relationship was particularly strengthened during the Reformation due to religious sympathies. Bavarian Germany, King Ludwig I, and the new example of public patronage was too Catholic for many Victorian English to accept. Ludwig I promoted a Catholic revival and tended toward absolutist policies. Religiously and politically, many Protestants were in great opposition to the Bavarian ruler. Additionally, Britain had little, if any, history of fresco painting. English artists promoted and prided themselves in their mastery of oils and color. Fresco painting was more focused on composition as it was meant for public display.[218]

Although the committee meant for the model of fresco painting and Bavarian public patronage to beneficial to Victorian English art and nationality, it was met with backlash. The hostility towards the Westminster plans shows the Victorian concern with religion and the threat of Catholicism and regression permeated beyond political issues. The arts, architecture, patronage of the arts, and culture were all undermined by anti-Catholicism and a strong dedication to Protestantism. Especially in the first few decades of the Victorian era.

The mounting progress for Catholics and Irish Catholics was regressive to the Englishman. Retrogression, cultural regression, revivalist, all these terms that repeatedly appear throughout the criticisms of the Brotherhood presented in this research. Before the presentation of *Christ,* reviewers were more concerned with the technical art connotations that "regressive" referred to.,

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[218] Winter, "German Fresco Painting," 293 – 294.

Old masters and monkish hands were referenced as shown earlier in this thesis. However, with *Christ,* the concerns over "Medieval" and dark age painting qualities became a part of the greater retrogressive problem that intellectuals such as Dickens pointed out. All aspects of English Victorian life were reshaping due to progress that some believed to be a relapse and threat. For Catholics, the revival was progress, but for the English Protestants, revival signaled an age of cultural regression. Dickens exaggerated the extent of the regression that the Brotherhood represented to him and other critics. "Pre-Newtonian Brotherhood," "Pre-Galileo Brotherhood," and 'Pre-Perspective Brotherhood" were several imagined groups Dickens used to inflate the regressive impression that groups such as the Brotherhood had on Victorian society.[219]

In a similar exaggerated and taunting manner, *Punch's* commentary on the diseased and ugly figures in *Christ* was not only indicative of a breakdown of morals and values in Victorian society, but it also, like Dickens, implied denial and regression of science, medicine, and technology. The review opens with the line, "The Painter has hitherto done little for Medicine but hold its professors up to ridicule."[220] One of the few positive reviews is in *The Guardian.* The author pointed out the many flaws that other reviews noted and wrote, "By some these works are regarded as a retrograde step in art and attempt to revive an exploded and obsolete style." The author of this review believed the word "retrograde" to be one of the most used opinions on Millais's *Christ,* affirming that regression was a primary concern. The Spectator review described the era in which the Brotherhood was imitating to be a time of "Puerile crudity."

> Along with other people of the public, the author believed that uneducated and mentally infantile people populated the "Medieval" era. The Brotherhood was not only copying imperfect art, but they were imitating unrefined and unschooled artists. As can be seen from the comments in many reviews, most critics viewed this as a regression in art and culture, education, and society. The threat of regression was felt in Victorian art,

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[219] Dickens, "Old Lamps for New Ones", 12-14.; Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible*, 88 – 89.
[220] "Pathological Exhibition at the Royal Academy," *Punch* 19, 198.

academics, community, education, and religion. While most, including the Brotherhood, supported the positive advancements in the sciences and technology, an underlying fear of what this could all mean for the progress of Protestantism increased. Known to historians as the "crisis of faith" and others as the "crisis of doubt," regardless of which theory one abides by, there was a crisis amongst the Protestant Victorian way of life.

The public's reactions to the Brotherhood and the responses to the painting *Christ* by Millais tell two different stories. One tells us that secularization was well underway, and the Brotherhood's transgressions against art represented a degeneration of the progress. Intellect, education, art, morals, and religion evolved from what the Victorians viewed as a dirty, barbaric, uneducated, and Catholic-dominated way of life. By regressing to old techniques that predated Raphael and admired artists monks instead, in the eyes of the public, the Brotherhood meant to bring Victorian culture back to those qualities through their influence of art. Victorian modernization was something to be protected, and the reviews on their art indicate that the public was concerned with the direction in which their progress would go. Despite this perceived turn towards a secular modernization of Victorian society, the public's reactions to *Christ* through periodical reviews indicate an intense defense of Protestant Christianity. The reviews focused less on the artistic technicalities that threatened the perfected methods of Reynolds. They began to aggressively comment on the religiosity of Millais, the heretic representation of the Holy Family, and the degradation of religious morals and values. The aggressive reactions in the reviews tell readers that, although the progress of art was significant, how Millais treated the Holy Family was irredeemable. The highly emotive responses to the *Christ* painting juxtaposed against the defense of modernity show that Victorian culture was neither overzealous nor nonreligious. Technology, science, and other innovations were not just changing daily life; those changes were also affecting how Victorians reacted to their doubts in faith.

Christ became a physical manifestation of Victorian fear and doubt regarding the religious spheres of their lives. The same stories of doubt and faith are found in the many Victorian novels that have been combed through by historians. Millais's painting unintentionally tells the same story of Victorian crisis and faith. The physical representation of the Holy Family, the painting's presence in the sacred Royal Academy, and the growing curiosity with "Medievalism" and the Brotherhood culminated fears that had been manifesting around Protestant Victorians. Millais's *Christ* left religious insecurity that the reviewers publicly voiced in the periodicals. The public, therefore, may have been influenced by the reviews to extend the religious insecurity into the public lives of Victorian society. Norris and Inglehart explained how insecurity often led to a resurgence or firm belief in religion on a much larger scale, with countries and regions being their examples. The Victorian reactions to the Brotherhood and Millais are smaller examples of an overzealous religious resurgence to defend against the insecurity that the crises of faith and doubt brought to Victorian life.

Rather than polarize the historical debates and theories of secularization, modernity, and religion's persistence, it is far more beneficial to understanding the past to view these phenomena as intertwined. One cannot exist without the other. To strictly understand the Victorian era as either secular or rigidly religious does not do justice to the time or the people who lived then. Relying strictly on church numbers, popular novels, and the most famous of intellects and their writings makes it impossible to understand the complexities of Victorian faith. It is difficult and sometimes impossible to know what people of the past were thinking and feeling. Still, it is possible to get a small glimpse into their thoughts and feelings by looking beyond the most obvious evidence, such as church attendance and the number of religious paintings exhibited. The reactions to Millais's painting and the Brotherhood in the press and journals are examples of looking further. By doing

so, we can recognize and acknowledge that religious life in Victorian England was complicated, muddy, and difficult for themselves to understand at the time. By polarizing their religiosity against a modern secularization, we deny that complicated relationship between the two and, in doing so, negate the crises of faith and doubt lived by the Victorian people.

CONCLUSION:

Secularization, modernity, reawakening, and religion are all terms strongly associated with the study of nineteenth-century England. The Victorian religious experience has long been described in historical study as a "crisis," yet the historiography has failed to relay the intensity of the dichotomy between religion and secularism. This thesis has shown that the oversimplification of the Victorian religious experience cannot be polarized into two camps of reawakening or religious zeal. Historical study reduces the complexity of "crisis" and ignores the synergism between modern secularization and Victorian religious experiences by polarizing the two. Millais's *Christ* has shown that the Victorian English navigated a complicated religious sphere during the Nineteenth century. Religious or secular zeal both grew and waned over the decades when either was threatened due to external factors like art culture as this thesis has demonstrated. It is my hope that by exploring the impassioned reviews to Millais and the Brotherhood's artwork, that the Victorian religious "crisis" is more humanized and understood. Marcel Gauchet contested that religion does not necessarily disappear within a modern society but changes its form and function to be accommodated. Additionally, Norris and Inglehart restructured secularization to say that instability and insecurity often lead to a surge in a religious zeal to fill those voids.

Millais's *Christ in the House of His Parents* in 1849 was a physical manifestation of the fears that culminated from the era. Tensions between the Catholic and Protestant populations mounted, and politics began to relax on Catholic matters. The influx of Catholic-Irish immigrants further strained relations. When Millais presented *Christ*, the Holy Family's raw naturalness represented every degradation of society possible. Academic values were taught by Reynolds and considered, especially by Charles Dickens, as a representative of society and culture. Millais represented the poor, the diseased, the immoral, the ugly, and the blasphemous in his rendition of

the Holy Family. He dared to represent the most exalted subject of high art in a hideous anti-academic manner and further dared to display it in the temple for high art and English culture: the Royal Academy. The initial premise behind Pre-Raphaelitism was difficult for many to understand visually and textually. The artists expressed their want for artistic progress but looked back to early Christian and pre-Renaissance art instead. They wanted to paint "true to nature," but the concept and the seemingly contradictory concepts did not transcribe well to a broad audience and were difficult to comprehend.[221] Critical reviews of Millais's painting attacked the aggressive realism in his work with ferocious comments and critique. The public failed to understand the artist's and the Brotherhood's intentions. The young men sought rebellion, and they did so in one of the most important forms that such cultural revolution manifests itself: in art. But this revolution was representative of Victorian Britain more generally. The uneasiness of the age associated with religious and secular tensions dominated the revies of the painting form the 1850 Royal Academy Exhibition in a way that demonstrates those anxieties.

The public's defense of religious imagery is an example of an increase in religious zeal derived from mounting insecurities. The reactions seen in the reviews were extreme because of the cultural and social atmosphere in which Millais presented *Christ*. Millais and the Brotherhood intended to rebel against the traditional Reynoldian era academy. Instead, *Christ* became a lightning rod: attacked as the anti-thesis of cultural progress and modernity, a threat to society's morals and values. The waves of faith and secularization continued to oscillate throughout the century as more scientific, religious, and artistic works emerged. Works by the Brotherhood were gradually accepted, and the way the artists rendered the Holy Family and Christ evolved as well. Modern art progressed, and the religious tensions continued to grow and ebb.

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[221] Michaela Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible*, 110 – 111.

As the century continued, Victorian faith continued to be tested and trialed. Only a year after Millais exhibited *Christ,* 1851 introduced the term "secularization" by English writer and newspaper editor George Holyoake. Holyoake intended for his term to promote the separation of civic affairs from religion without actively dismissing religious beliefs. Several years later, Charles Darwin published the famous *Origins of Species* (1859), and only months after came the hotly contested collection *Essays, and Reviews* (1860) followed.[222] Holyoke's ideas and the two publications added to the religious upset already in place. *Essays and Reviews*, a collection of biblical criticisms, set forth a discourse war waged in pamphlets and articles that eventually led to a church trial for heresy. Although it was initially unnoticed until the press reviewed it in *The Westminster, The Quarterly Reviews,* and *The Edinburgh Review,* the seven-essay publication quickly overshadowed Darwin's *Origins*.

Meanwhile, the art world still engaged in discussions on religious representation in art After the backlash of *Christ,* Millais gradually moved away from the Brotherhood's aggressive realism, and after 1851, he stopped painting religious subjects almost entirely.[223] Out of all the original members, Hunt remained the most loyal and faithful to the Brotherhood aesthetic and continued to paint religious subjects in the Brotherhood style. Whereas paintings such as *Christ* received vehement critique, Hunt's religious works received increasing praise over the years because his paintings reflected his relationship with faith. 1849 through 1853 publications show the critics focused on the academic technicalities and the social and moral implications of the

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[222] For further in depth reading please see Michael Rectenwald, "Secularism and the cultures of the nineteenth-century scientific naturalism," *The British Journal for the History of Science* 46, no. 2, June 2013, 231 – 254.
[223] Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible,* 110 – 111.

Brotherhood's paintings.[224] Later reviews show the critics were increasingly concerned with Hunt's religious paintings' emotional and personal qualities.

As the decade moved on, the Brotherhood's art became recognized as a necessary move away from what increasingly became perceived as art's stale academic practice. Reynold's Academy, long dedicated to the art of the great masters, became associated with terms such as "conventional," "plagiarist," and "idolatrous."[225] Pre-Raphaelitism, as Victorians knew it, gradually dissipated during the remaining decade, becoming practically extinct by 1853. Although still debated throughout the 1850s, influential critics such as John Ruskin helped change the public's understanding of the Brotherhood's art. Their work became more acceptable, and other artists began to emulate the Brotherhood's works in Pre-Raphaelesque styles.[226] Although the original Brotherhood dissolved, the Pre-Raphaelite style did not. The progressive style took on some changes with new and younger artists while Hunt perfected his version of the Brotherhood's initial concepts. The periodical press eventually succumbed to the Brotherhood's influence on art and later praised their efforts in art.

Ruskin's defense, the sensational press, and the young men's responses to the criticism shaped their futures as artists. Millais continued to produce artworks, although he increasingly strayed further away from the rebellious methods of the Brotherhood.[227] He later became an Associate for the Royal Academy, the first artist to receive a hereditary title from the Queen, and in the last year of his life he was elected President of the Royal Academy.[228] Rossetti became

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[224] For more reading on later reactions to the Brotherhood, see William Hauptman, "Hanging the Pre-Raphaelites and Others: The Royal Academy Exhibition of 1851," *The British Art Journal* 19, no. 1, 2018, 4 – 28.

[225] Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible*, 125.

[226] Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible*, 127.

[227] From 1851 - 1854, Ruskin wrote several letters to *The Times* to defend the Brotherhood against the criticism that they received from the public and other critics. He also recommended their work officially in his 1853 Edinburgh lectures.

[228] John Ruskin, "The Pre-Raffaelites," Letter to the Editor, *London Times* 20, no. 800, May 13, 1851, 8 – 9.

reclusive and halted from contributing to exhibitions and focused on collecting private patrons for his works. Hunt is considered to have remained truest to the Brotherhood ideals throughout his successful career as an artist.[229] By 1853 the Brotherhood, as it was known, dissolved and the artists had each gone their own way. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood however resurfaced with a slightly different aesthetic by the 1860s when Rossetti became acquainted with Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris.[230]

This thesis has demonstrated that the Victorian era did not represent a chasm between the religious zeal of the era of religious Awakening on the one side and the increasing secular, industrial era of modernization on the other. The previous historiography has painted the era as either or. This is due to the unintentional bias of the sources used to write the Victorian religious historiography. This thesis is unique in that it used unlikely sources to discover religious zeal and decline in Victorian public life. Past research on Victorian religious culture used religious or anti-religious sources. These sources included but were not limited to influential writings about religion and religious experiences or texts that countered religious beliefs, Other, more statistical data was derived from records such as those kept by parishes on church attendance, funding, and new or renovative construction. Other research considered the growth of Catholicism in England due to the influx of Irish Immigration and relaxed restraints on Catholic practices. These sources limited any scholarly deductions to the religious spheres and created an intentional bias that has led to the polarized secularism debates in Victorian religious historiography. Therefore, this thought process ignores the possibility that religion can change form and function to adapt to modern life. This religious and secular polarization denies the Victorian people a history of personal struggles with faith and doubt and the ebb and flow of Protestant and Catholic belief. Gauchet acknowledged that

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[229] Graham, *Critics and Coteries, and Pre-Raphaelite Celebrity*, 16 – 18.; Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible,* 127.

religion does not have to disappear in a modernizing society, but that it can be adapted. Newer secularization methodologies put forth by Norris and Inglehart suggest that faith and religious zeal are based on the personal security and safety of a country. As this thesis has demonstrated, both secularization and modernization theories are exemplified in the printed media reactions to the Brotherhood's artworks from 1850 and on.

The first year that the young men of the Brotherhood presented their new style, the critical press viewed the artists as naïve and immature, but still full of promise and talent. They were thought to be following a trend as all young people do at some point. The critics believed with time they would grow out of it. The critical language in the reviews were mild and offered warning to the artists to quickly grow out of their naïve phase and continue to create art in the Reynoldian academic ideal that the Royal Academy supported. However, it was the Brotherhood's aim to do just the opposite and rebel against the Academy and stale Reynoldian methods. Therefore, the following year the men presented bolder works in the 1850 exhibitions. Out of all the paintings and artists, John Everett Millais received the most vehement of critiques for his painting of a young Jesus in his family's carpenter shop. Critical reviews found in the printed press that year bordered on hysterical. The reactions were extreme, and the language used to describe the paintings changed from technical terms to scathing emotional adjectives. Art historians and scholars, such as Michaela Geibelhausen and Wendy Graham used the printed press in their research on the Brotherhood. However, their research was limited to their scope of art historical study. Giebelhausen focused on tracing the timeline of biblical representation in the nineteenth century and how it progressed in artistic spheres in England. Graham focused mostly on sexuality and the sensationalism of the press as it pertained to the Brotherhood. Although historical context and background connected the reviews to their lines of inquiry, the scholars' uses of the printed press

reviews remained limited to the religious and art historical religious spheres. Thus, in their research the scholarly study of Victorian religious art remained in the religious and art historical historiographies and spoke little to the religiosity and secularization of the Victorian public sphere.

Millais's *Christ* appeared during a culmination of Catholic-Protestant and British-Irish tensions that were mounting since the turn of the century. Restrictions on Catholic rights and slowly loosened, and Catholic practices were more visible in public. Court cases, money, public conversions, and growing Catholic support groups threatened Protestantism in England. To worsen matters, German academics scrutinized the sacred Bible. Biblical studies that derived from geology and other new scientific practices challenged the authenticity of the chapters in the Bible. Some scholars and intellectuals presented the Bible as simply a text that could be analyzed and studied like any other. All the while, Victorian social structures changed as well. The modern era brought a second class of citizens that further divided the poor and the aristocrats. A rising middle-class of working citizens gained wealth and social status and created a third sphere of Victorian culture. This class of people honored hard work, upheld religious and family life, and sought their own ideas of artistic taste and culture. Due to this, prints of popular paintings overshadowed the sale of actual paintings. The popularity of genres such as history painting remained amongst the elite and therefore declined in overall popularity. The middle-class preferred genre art that depicted domestic scenes of hard work, family life, and faithful devotion.

This thesis hopes to show the complicated relationship between modern secularization theories and modern religious faith. On one hand the increase in Catholic faith and the rise of a faithfully religious middle-class presents a story of a religiously zealous Victorian culture. The rise in scientific studies, biblical criticism, intellectual writings, and changes in artistic culture present a different tale of a modernizing society moving towards secularization. However, all these

events were taking place together and not exclusive from one another. Therefore, it would not be accurate to assume that Victorian culture was also exclusively religious or secular. Nor should scholarly study of the Victorian religious experience be limited to the religious sphere. Millais's painting of *Christ* provides a physical representation of this paradox of faith and secular. The reviews of the painting are the evidence of the fear and anxiety, or if following Norris and Inglehart, Victorian insecurity. The fear and doubt created waves of religious zeal, contentment, and lack of faith. *Christ* was an outlet for the public and press to express the fear and anxiety of the midcentury.

I hope to leave readers of this thesis with several points to consider. Victorian religious experiences cannot be simplified into religious or non-religious, but rather religion is always changing and adapting to contemporary circumstances. Victorian historiography must move past outdated secularization ideas to properly study the religious and modern cultures of the era. Second, to do this, we need to examine a wide variety of sources. The works of the PRB and their critics are just a case study in the usefulness of alternate source work.

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by

Ashley L. Morse

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