PAINTED SERMONS: EXPLANATORY RHETORIC AND WILLIAM HOLMAN HUNT’S INSCRIBED FRAMES

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This study was undertaken to determine the rhetorical function of the verbal texts inscribed on the frames of the paintings of the Victorian Pre-Raphaelite artist William Holman Hunt. The nineteenth century expansion of the venues of rhetoric from spoken to written forms coupled with the growing interest in *belle lettres* created the possibility for the inscriptions to have a greater function than merely captioning the work.

Visits were made to museums in the United States and Great Britain to ascertain which of Hunt’s paintings have inscribed frames. In addition, primary sources at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and the British Library, London, were consulted to determine if the artist had recorded his design plans or stated any specific purpose for the inscriptions. Contemporary reviews and exhibition catalogs were also consulted at these libraries. In addition, secondary sources were examined for relevant discussions of Hunt’s works.

It was concluded that the inscribed works fit the parameters of explanatory rhetoric, a form informational and didactic rather than persuasive in nature. The common nineteenth century venue for explanatory rhetoric was the pulpit, instructing converted parishioners about Church doctrines and their Christian duties. It was also concluded that this shift in rhetorical purpose was not new to the Victorian era, rather that there is a long history of explanatory rhetoric going back at least to Augustine. As well it was determined that there is a long history of the use of the visual in sermonizing. Thus, Hunt’s works, addressing doctrine and duty, reflect the characteristics of explanatory rhetoric.
This study suggests that exploration of explanatory rhetoric should be undertaken in
greater detail, for it is a rich addition to the field of rhetoric, potentially reaching across the
boundaries of the liberal arts. In addition, this study suggests that a re-examination of the modes
of discourse be considered, according information the same consideration as persuasion and
opening the door for categorizing rhetorical practice by purpose, not genre. The conclusions of
this study support the contention of Robert Connors whose articles on explanatory rhetoric
encourage a deeper consideration of that relatively unexplored rhetorical mode.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The study of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres supposes and requires a proper acquaintance with the rest of the liberal arts. It embraces them all within its circle, and recommends them to the highest regard. Hugh Blair

“A picture is worth a thousand words.” The adage has become so trite as to be accepted without question, but it is nonetheless true. How much more powerful would the picture be if combined with written text that complements it? Just such a scenario exists within the painting practices of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB), a group of young crusading artists during the Victorian era. These artists as a whole, and William Holman Hunt in particular, skillfully combined text and painting both within the painting and on the confines of the frame. Some critics see the combination of text with painting functioning merely as a caption. But could the text relate differently to the canvas? The practice of the Pre-Raphaelites in general is one of painstaking work and design. To think that Hunt, as the leading member of that group, would not put the same degree of planning into the framing of his works as he did into their composition is unlikely. When one considers the rhetorical function of these texts which mix the media of the verbal and the visual, most often on the frames themselves, a broader purpose than persuasion may well be evident. Though rhetoric is generally considered to be persuasive in purpose, not all rhetorical fathers, among them Hugh Blair and George Campbell, have limited it to that purpose. So, determining the purpose of rhetoric evidenced by these inscribed works may well shed light on the versatility of rhetoric. As a result, trying to determine the rhetorical purpose of these inscribed works is an exercise in reading the paintings, but from a verbal rather than merely visual stance. A rhetorical analysis of text and work and the two in combination should offer some insights into not only the field of rhetoric but also Hunt’s individual works and how they fit within the context of his canon and the field of rhetoric as well.
In his Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, from which the head note is taken, Hugh Blair prefaces his discussion with the remarks that “one of the most distinguished privileges which Providence has conferred upon mankind, is the power of communicating their thoughts to one another. . . . Speech is the great instrument by which man becomes beneficial to man” (30). Communication which contributes to the benefit of others is a lofty goal, worthy of any rhetor and broad enough to encompass all methods of that communication. One of these positive avenues of communication is teaching, and within the realm of rhetoric this form can be categorized as explanatory. In his essay on explanatory rhetoric, Robert Connors characterizes it as the following: “primarily found in written discourse” with an “informative” purpose that aims at communication or instruction which in turn leads to works (27). This didactic function of rhetoric is one that has been relatively overlooked in rhetorical studies, Connors contends, though it has its roots as far back as Augustine who encouraged his preachers to take on a teaching role. In the nineteenth century, the timeframe of this study, the advocates of explanatory rhetoric were the rhetoricians George Campbell and Hugh Blair. These men, though eighteenth century rhetoricians and teachers, were the primary rhetorical influence in the nineteenth century since their primary works formed the core of the nineteenth century rhetorical studies and education. Each of these men discussed explanatory rhetoric within the context of rhetorical study and practice, urging his students to incorporate its principles into their own repertoire of skills and honing their sense of its appropriate venues. In light of explanatory rhetoric’s Augustinian ties, it is not surprising that both advocates of this type of rhetoric were preachers as well as rhetoricians. The rhetorical avenue of preaching lent itself admirably to explanatory rhetoric in part because of religion’s dual purpose: to persuade people of the necessity of salvation and then to instruct those converts in the tenets of their new faith. Connors notes this
aspect of explanatory rhetoric: “By 1772 most Europeans were Christians and most Englishmen were Anglicans. They did not need to be persuaded to join the faith; the element of persuasion was not lost, but it had been undermined by attacks on the Doctrine of Works and increasingly was less important to pulpit orators than was explanation of doctrine” (34). This shift in nineteenth century rhetorical emphasis makes an examination of explanatory rhetoric appropriate because of its growing role in rhetorical practice. Further, through Hugh Blair’s widening of rhetoric’s scope to include written as well as spoken discourse, the venues for explanatory rhetoric become more numerous. Looking at how these men characterized and addressed this rhetorical approach is foundational to this study.

EXPLANATORY RHETORIC

According to George Campbell

George Campbell spends a great deal of time developing the constraints and principles of explanatory rhetoric in the form of sermons. Five of the twenty-two lectures in his book Lectures on Systematic Theology and Pulpit Eloquence concern themselves with the rationale for and structure of explanatory sermons. He lists three main purposes for this type of rhetorical approach: 1) “explaining something unknown,” 2) “proving something disbelieved or doubted,” (228) and 3) “illustrating one point of doctrine or of duty” (233). These purposes are all addressed, as he says, “to the understanding” (228). He further distinguishes “lecturing” from preaching, classifying the practice of lecturing into the delivery of Expositions and Lectures. The goal of lecturing is “to explain the train of reasoning contained, or the series of events related, in a certain portion of the sacred text, and to make suitable observations from it, in regard either to the doctrines, or to the duties of our religion” (232). Within a Lecture, the explication “explains[s] the import of a portion of scripture, which may not be perfectly clear to Christians of all
denominations” (232). The “remarks or inferences” then provide “useful reflections” on the subject matter (232). The goals of these types are both to “teach the people to read the scriptures with understanding” and to teach “to read . . . with reflection” (232). As Campbell continues his instruction, he shows clearly how the distinction between the Lecture and Explanatory Sermons is minimal in purpose. He notes that “both [the exposition and the lecture] are properly of the explanatory kind,” differing only in “the form of composition” (232). And “indeed several English sermons . . . may strictly be denominated lectures in the sense to which we just appropriated the term” (232-33).

In Lecture VII, Campbell defines the explanatory sermon as “a sermon addressed to the understanding of the hearers, and of which the direct view is to explain some doctrine of our religion, or the nature and extent of some duty” (243). The “antagonist” of the preacher/orator is the “ignorance” of the listeners, and the final goal is “to dispel” that ignorance (243). This emphasis on the cognitive rather than emotional aspects of the audience is foundational to explanatory rhetoric. There is little urging by Campbell for his students to incorporate pathetic arguments; the approach is rational, rather than emotional. Explanation comes before persuasion though the goal is ultimately for that explanation to result in the actions of the audience; as Campbell puts it, explanatory sermons should not “terminate in being understood and assented to, but in having a happy influence on the disposition of mind and whole behaviour” (288). But before actions can be taken, the audience must first understand a rationale for change.

After noting the foundational similarities between Lectures and Explanatory Sermons, Campbell then spends the rest of his lectures detailing the components of those sermons. He begins with addressing the choice of subject, urging the rhetor to choose just one. He then urges that “the text ought to be chosen for the subject”, not vice versa (266). A text, he notes, may
contain more than one subject; choosing the subject first will contribute to the unity of the sermon. The text should be a portion of Scripture because it will serve as “a motto to the discourse” and “adds a certain dignity” (245) to the sermon since the Bible is the “foundation in scripture, the only standard of our religion (245). The text should also be plain and pertinent, simple and perspicuous. Campbell repeatedly urges his students to stay focused on the one truth which the sermon comprises, not being waylaid by biblical commentators, controversies of interpretations, or textual ambiguities. The preacher/orator is to be aware of these factors, but not burden his audience with them. In this vein, the style of delivery should also be simple, teaching the unknown truths by using the more common ones known by the audience, much in the way that Christ taught His disciples and the multitudes by using parables of everyday life situations. These general principles keep the audience in the forefront of the orator’s mind; it is, after all, the reason for the discourse. Their understanding is the issue; the preacher’s entire purpose is wrapped up in ascertaining what his audiences knows and does not know, for it is the education of that audience that is his goal.

Campbell then addresses the specific parts of a sermon, customizing them for this rhetorical purpose. The introduction or exordium prepares the listener for the subject. Then, if the text chosen is plain enough, Campbell allows that a discussion of the context is not always necessary in the exposition. The partition “ought to exhaust the subject” but remain confined to it using a “natural simplicity” (265) and ordering the points climactically from most obvious or familiar to less. The Conclusion should recap the main points with the goal “to regulate our lives,” (288) and here is the only place that any “address to the affections” (289) is appropriate. These particular guidelines govern the construction of an explanatory sermon and keep the pulpit orator’s focus on the doctrine or duty he is explaining. The didactic quality of the explanatory
sermon demands a centering on the subject, for it is knowledge of the subject that the audience lacks. This cognitive shift from primarily achieving audience action to achieving audience knowledge is what sets explanatory rhetoric apart.

According to Hugh Blair

Hugh Blair also addresses explanatory sermons though not in the detail that Campbell does. He spends little time on the philosophy behind this type of rhetoric instead detailing, as Campbell does, the effect this approach has on the construction of the sermon. He, too, breaks down the parts of the sermon, but somewhat differently than Campbell. In *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, Blair urges that the introduction be simple and “should never be long” (112) because it “open[s] the way to the subject” (112). The proposition is a clear and distinct “enunciation of the subject” (112). A good plan of division can make the sermon “more instructive to the bulk of the hearers” (113). And the explication should be “clear,” “concise,” and “distinct” (115). This explication section of the sermon characterizes the explanatory sermon in Blair’s scheme. Other sermons contain a Narration division, but the explanatory sermon, appropriate to its educational nature, focuses on the knowledge-building goal of the orator. Blair sums up his sketchy prescription with the following focused paragraph:

To explain the doctrine of the text with propriety; to give a full and perspicuous account of the nature of that virtue or duty which forms the subject of the discourse, is properly the didactic part of preaching. . . . The great art of succeeding in it, is to meditate profoundly on the subject, so as to be able to place it in a clear and strong point of view. Consider what light other passages of scripture throw upon it; consider whether it be a subject nearly related to some other from which it is proper to distinguish it; consider whether it can be illustrated to advantage by comparing it with, or opposing it to, some
other thing; by inquiring into causes, or tracing effects; by pointing out examples, or appealing to the feelings of the hearers; that thus, a definite, precise, circumstantial view may be afforded of the doctrine to be inculcated. (116-17)

Here Blair focuses, not on the nuts-and-bolts of sermon construction, but on the orator’s knowledge of his subject. The preacher-teacher is useless to his pupils if he has not a firm grasp of the subject. Or as the Bible puts it, it would be a case of the blind leading the blind. Blair urges the preacher-orator to examine the subject from every side, considering how it impinges on other subjects, how to communicate its core nature to an untutored audience, and how it affects their lives. Blair instructs his students to study the subject in depth, to analyze its components and ramifications, to categorize it clearly and carefully, and to keep it in context. This burden of examination is the rhetor’s; it is not the audience’s. It is, again, the job of the rhetor to present the audience with the clearest nugget of truth or doctrine so that they might internalize its value and amend their ways in light of it. But the teaching comes before the action; the change in their practice must come as a result of understanding, not emotional urging. Both Blair and Campbell focus on Reason: Campbell on the Reason of the audience; Blair on that of the preacher. Each group must grasp the principle before the goal of the sermon has been met.

RATIONALE FOR THIS STUDY

The most obvious reason to study is to improve one’s knowledge. That reason is especially valid here because little has been done with the concept of explanatory rhetoric. Furthermore, one of the best ways to explore a new concept is to look at examples of it. This study examines the inscribed works of William Holman Hunt in light of the principles of explanatory rhetoric. It is important to determine the defining characteristics of the new form—in this case, the subject matter and purpose—and then measure the examples by that definition.
Most of Hunt’s inscribed works offer a consistent adherence to the principles of explanatory rhetoric as laid out by Blair and Campbell. This study examines those works in detail, divided by their subject matter—doctrine and duty—since they are equally didactic in purpose.

A research database search reveals no hits for the term “explanatory rhetoric” or “explanatory sermons.” Robert Connors contributed two articles on this subject to Written Communication in 1984 and 1985. In the first of his articles, he states, “Explanatory discourse, however, has been given hardly any historical or theoretical attention at all” (27). He goes on to remark on his purpose for his survey article, “[I]f this essay is in some ways an admission of how little we know about it [explanatory discourse], I hope it will also be taken as an invitation to delve into the many issues surrounding explanatory discourse that are as yet unresolved” (28). While his subsequent article in 1985 addresses the concept of explanatory rhetoric from 1850 to the present and finds its presence in the work of James Kinneavy and Frank J. D’Angelo, Connors nonetheless bemoans the lack of history associated with explanatory rhetoric: “Our rhetorical knowledge of explanation is much less developed than our knowledge of persuasion” (“1850 to the Present” 58). He goes on to accord explanatory discourse a significant role in what is now the present study of rhetoric. In light of his estimation about the importance of explanation for the field of rhetoric, an historical examination of the practice of this rhetoric is valuable. Filling in the gap of rhetoric’s past is foundational to the stability of its present.

But more important than merely the historical occurrence of explanatory discourse is the vitality of the genre. Certainly George Campbell and Hugh Blair advocated the arena of preaching as appropriate and fundamental to this variety of rhetoric. However, it is my contention that just as preaching found its way outside the cathedral to the camp meeting grounds, so explanatory rhetoric found its way into other venues of communication, specifically
the artistic works of William Holman Hunt, a founding member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. An examination of the conjunction of verbal text and pictorial representation in the *oeuvre* of one of the main figures of the Brotherhood, William Holman Hunt, reveals that the rhetoric of explanation is fully present in the majority of his inscribed works, his obviously religious works as well as those which appear more secular in nature.

**ARTISTIC CONTEXT**

In 1848 a group of seven young British artists banded together to stage their own rebellion against the powerful art establishment represented by the Royal Academy (RA). The group began with William Holman Hunt, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and John Everett Millais. These men then persuaded William Michael Rossetti, Dante’s brother; James Collinson; Thomas Woolner; and Frederick George Stephens to join their band. Only Hunt, Dante Rossetti, Millais, and Collinson were painters; Woolner was a sculptor, and William Michael Rossetti and Stephens were writers and critics. As the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood gained notoriety, other artists began emulating their style and their principles. However, by 1853, the formal Brotherhood had disbanded due to practical considerations such as Woolner’s emigration to Australia and Collinson’s resignation. More importantly, the Brotherhood splintered because of philosophical differences: Rossetti forsook the PRB’s revolutionary cause and begin painting “art for art’s sake”; Millais returned to the fold of the RA and turned his art into successful commercial endeavors; but William Holman Hunt remained the staunchest Pre-Raphaelite throughout his life.

These artists created their own rules: taking John Ruskin’s advice in *Modern Painters*, they determined to paint from Nature herself with as much truthfulness as possible and to reject both the color schemes and the subject matter sanctioned by the Academy. Instead of the brown
glazes employed by the RA painters, the PRB used a wet, white surface, which was then painstakingly painted over. The result was glowing colors that reflected and drew the eye. Criticizing the founding Academy president Sir Joshua Reynolds, the PRB vowed to break the “rules” of “Sir Sloshua,” as they called him, and paint noble pictures instead of sentimental ones; use new techniques of perspective; and reject the conventions formulated by Reynolds and taught by the RA. Rather than following the neoclassical principles which dictated that becoming an artist depended on following the rules of the previous masters, especially Raphael who was considered the exemplar of the best artistic practices, these reformers rejected the teachings of their elders, in art and in life. They wanted to return to the innocence and depth of meaning that they perceived in works before the time of Raphael. Thus, their choice of name—Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood—reflects not only their goals but also their admiration for the earlier principles of art.

Coupled with these artistic methodology issues is the incorporation of verbal texts to complement their visual texts. The verbal texts are of several kinds and appear in several locations. Some texts were carved into the frame itself, often accompanied by other ornamentation. They were also used as chat labels, hung with the work on the walls of the gallery. They were also inserted into the exhibition catalogs. These catalogs, especially in the case of Hunt’s one-man shows, often became quite elaborate, running to tens of pages of verbal explication. Verbal texts also appeared in drawings and sketches though they may have been omitted from the final work. They even appear on the reverse of the works, a position that privileges the owner of the piece. The kinds of inscriptions vary—selections from the Bible; quotations of previous and contemporary writers such as Shakespeare, Keats, Tennyson, and Browning; and lines from the painters’ own poetry.
ARTISTIC FOCUS

The potential for rhetorical analysis of these texts is great. Just as the texts vary in type and the artists in technique, so the interpretation of these verbal elements is rife with possibility. However, one artist and his use of texts stand out from the rest. I chose William Holman Hunt as the subject of this study because of his quintessential character as the “truest Pre-Raphaelite.” Hunt was the one member of the PRB to remain consistently true to the goals and techniques of the Brotherhood through a career that lasted until 1910 and carried with it mixed reviews. Initially vilified with the rest of the Brotherhood at the start of the movement, Hunt found himself regarded as a sort of artistic icon by the end of his career because of his painting The Light of the World, what Jeremy Maas calls “one of the most celebrated religious pictures ever painted” (i). This work became “a key Victorian religious image” (Wood 44) and made a groundbreaking “tour of the British Empire, where it was seen by some seven million people” (Maas i). It is this degree of success, though never as massive monetarily as popularly, coupled with his tenacious devotion to the tenets of the movement that makes Hunt worthy of consideration.

John Tupper, in a letter dated 24 May 1870, tells Hunt, “Gabriel told me that himself and all the P. R. Bs, except you, have relinquished P. R. B. principles” (Coombs et al. 121). He reiterates the compliment in 1879, stating that Dante Rossetti “says you are the only member of the old PRB who has not given up the Nature Doctrine, & pract[ice]” (Coombs et al. 281). This acknowledgement of the failure of the other members of the PRB to uphold their original tenets in the face of public outcry, monetary pressures, desire for acclaim, and shifting philosophies merely emphasizes the fixed devotion of Hunt to the cause. Current scholars of the Pre-Raphaelites confirm this estimation. Christopher Wood calls Hunt “the least known and
appreciated of the Brotherhood, although he was the only one to remain faithful to its principles” (40). Jan Marsh states that “Hunt remained faithful to the original pictorial and pious impulses” (Pre-Raphaelite Women 18). Julian Treuherz contends that “to the end of his life [Hunt] remained the most earnest of the Pre-Raphaelites, convinced of the didactic role of art” (Victorian Painting 98). Timothy Hilton charges that “Hunt, alone of the Pre-Raphaelites, hardly changed the basic procedures of his painting as he grew older, but stubbornly and undeviatingly clung to what he believed to be ‘the true principles’ until his death (84). The agreement on Hunt’s steadfast allegiance to the purposes and processes of Pre-Raphaelitism among these leading voices in the field of Pre-Raphaelite studies creates a natural leadership position for him and accords him the respect due to one who has internalized the beliefs of a revolutionary band. Studying such a leader is a natural choice; for in studying the leader, one studies the movement in its purest form. It was no merely caricatured truth when on 19 July 1879 Vanity Fair published the print of William Holman Hunt as “The True Pre-Raphaelite of the World.”

An important component of Pre-Raphaelite art, because an important component of Victorian art in general and one that is fully adopted by Holman Hunt, is the instructional purpose of art. The preceding quotations by Pre-Raphaelite scholars touch on this truth: Marsh refers to the PRB’s “pious impulses” and Treuherz remarks on the “didactic role of art.” But it is not just current critics who assign this role to art in the Victorian era; it was a position firmly upheld by Victorian artists and critics alike. William Makepeace Thackeray laments the commercialization of art: “The young painters of England are not doing their duty. . . . The thought of the money is leading them astray. . . Why do these great geniuses fail in their duty of instruction?” (179). Here the role of the artist as teacher is plain. Hunt himself sees art as a responsibility with associated penalties and rewards, so much so that the first sentence of his
memoir of the movement explains his position: “Art is generally regarded as a light and irresponsible pursuit, entailing for its misuse no penalty to the artist or to the nation of which he is a citizen” (I: vii). He believes that a nation’s art plays a role in the construction of that nation’s values and that the artist is a vital part of that process. He states,” To whom but the artist is relegated the task of giving a tangible and worthy image of the national body and mind, who else may select and uphold the visible sign of that beauty in his race which is most heroic physically and mentally?” (I: xiii-xiv). It is no great leap to move from influencing a nation’s perception of itself to using art to reform that image. John Ruskin, the foremost critic of his age, urged such a role. In his overview of the history of art, which precedes his discussion of the Pre-Raphaelites, he remarks:

[M]an is created an observer and an imitator; and his function is to convey knowledge to his fellow-men, of such things as cannot be taught otherwise than ocularly. For a long time this function remained a religious one: it was to impress upon the popular mind the reality of the objects of faith, and the truth of the histories of Scripture, by giving visible form to both. That function has now passed away, and none has as yet taken its place.

(Pre-Raphaelitism 14)

I believe that William Holman Hunt took up the cause and renewed that spiritually didactic purpose of art through his combined visual and verbal texts.

Hunt supports this assertion himself in his memoir. “As priests are bound to remove all veils from vice and preach that virtue alone is imperishable, so the true limner has to show the hideousness and deadliness of sham fascination by proving the everlasting dignity of the natural proportions of the human form” (I: xv). This return to Truth about Nature, in this case the human figure, is a key tenet of Pre-Raphaelitism. His imagery of the artist’s role as priest is emphasized
later in the passage: “The office of the artist should be looked upon as a priest’s service in the temple of Nature” (I: xv). Hunt’s imagery of pantheistic priest may seem to be anything other than Christian, but considering the religious subjects of many of his paintings and his use of biblical inscriptions, one can easily see the progression from priest to preacher. He rhapsodizes about the effect of Ruskin’s Modern Painters on him at the formation stage of the Brotherhood, obviously considering the artist as one with a Christian, not a pagan, purpose:

Passages in it made my heart thrill. He [Ruskin] feels the power and responsibility of art more than any author I have ever read. He describes pictures of the Venetian School in such a manner that you see them with your inner sight, and you feel that the men who did them had been appointed by God, like old prophets, to bear a sacred message, and that they delivered themselves like Elijah of old. (I: 90)

Hunt apparently decided to emulate those artists which Ruskin so obviously admired.

In his letters to Thomas Tupper, Hunt repeatedly refers to his ideas of art “for the good of mankind” (Coombs et al. 173) and how he struggles with the painstaking techniques that take enormous amounts of time and bring little income, declaring that he would gladly renounce painting if he could, considering “how sacred my resolve would be as one that God had forced upon me” (Coombs et al. 196). But he struggles on, believing that “all ability and success come from the Lord of Power who can give or withhold it at pleasure” (Coombs et al. 285). He uses the language of religion in his description to Tupper of his purpose in painting The Light of the World: “The subject may or may not be what they call a mystical one[,] to me the object is not to preach with it any particular sermon” (Coombs et al. 129). Here Hunt directly relates his job as artist to that of a preacher with the correlation of the painting and the sermon though he refrains from imposing any specific lesson on the viewer. This confluence in his mind makes the
presence of biblical quotations natural to his works, framing the art just as the choice of a text frames a sermon.

Hunt followed so closely the tenet of the Pre-Raphaelites to paint from nature that he undertook, not one, but three trips to the Holy Land in order to paint accurately the landscape and people of that region. He records in *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* his reflections on his purpose in going to such lengths:

Confessing to [Augustus] Egg that my project of going to Syria had originated when I was a boy at school when the lessons from the New Testament were read, I added, that “although the revelations of science, and more transiently the conclusions drawn from these by theorists and commentators, had often compelled me to reconsider my earlier understanding of the story, yet the doings of that Divine Master in Syria never ceased to claim my homage. The pursuit of painting only gave my childish Palestine project distincter purpose. The gain in thoughtfully spent life is,” I said, “the continual disturbance of obsolete convictions; at such tremulation of ideas one is tempted to shoot off to any extreme harbour of rest, and to violently denounce all others. I would guard against this danger with my respect for impartial investigation, built upon confidence, that truth, whatever it be, is above all price, and my desire is very strong to use my powers to make more tangible Jesus Christ’s history and teaching. Art has often illustrated the theme, but it has surrounded it with many enervating fables, and perverted the heroic drama with feeble interpretation. We have every reason to believe that the Father of all, [sic] demands that every generation should contribute its quota of knowledge and wisdom to attain the final purpose, and however small my mite may be, I
wish to do my poor part, and in pursuing this aim I ought not surely to serve art less perfectly. (I: 348-49)

Here Hunt combines fully the aims of biblical study and artistic representation, merging the two into a sermon about Christ’s life. He measures this goal of his against the tides of religious skepticism common in a Victorian England in the midst of the growing pains of science and technology. Yet he sees art as a vehicle for the furtherance of Christian teaching and that very Christian teaching as a means to a better art.

In conclusion, Hunt’s own contemporaries saw his efforts in the light of a nationalistic sermonizer bound by a calling larger than desire for money or for fame. The Portfolio in 1871 notes, “The Englishness of this painter is one of the most striking and most profoundly based characteristics of his mind. . . . Hunt’s mind and career [are marked by a] profound sense of the duty not less than the necessity of cultivating the talent intrusted [sic] to his keeping” (qtd. in Coombs et al. 139). Hunt’s dedication to the tenets of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was formed not at the urging of his companions but out of a deep regard for the good of England and the grace of God.

The final support for seeing Hunt as an artistic preacher-teacher is his personal habits. Throughout his career, from the very start even, Hunt was a teacher. Rossetti, dissatisfied with his mundane assignments by Ford Madox Brown, approached Hunt and requested to become his student. Thomas Seddon, a Pre-Raphaelite landscape painter, accompanied Hunt to the Holy Land in order to learn from him. While there, Hunt recounts his own lengthy conversations with a Bedouin boy on the tenets of Mohamedism; “He was a Moslem who would have died for the prophet, but he knew nothing of Mahamet’s history, and when I told stories of the prophet’s life and the establishment of his religion he gazed into my face with a breathless attention” (I: 482).
He explains to a sheik that he wants to go to the Dead Sea “just to explain to people in England, accustomed overmuch to blessings, how awful is a place accursed of heaven” (I: 469). These practices and stated purposes are those of a natural teacher, one who will seek any opportunity to instruct others.

Hunt’s use of verbal and visual text in combination coupled with his beliefs about the purpose of Art in general and the application of those beliefs to his personal purpose in life make him the logical subject of any study about the presence of explanatory rhetoric in the artworks of the nineteenth century. His own statements about his desire to serve as priest/preacher prompt a consideration of the inscriptions on the frames of his paintings to be explanatory rhetoric, a teaching of doctrine to those who already believe but perhaps do not understand fully. The position of teacher already assumed by Hunt made this examination of his works as explanatory sermons natural.

INSCRIPTIONS AS EXPLANATORY RHETORIC

It is not difficult to ascribe the characteristics of explanatory rhetoric to the inscriptions so prevalent among Holman Hunt’s paintings. First, thanks to Hugh Blair’s widening of rhetoric to include written as well as spoken discourse, the verbal nature of this frame ornamentation qualifies as rhetoric in general. But it is in the address to the understanding that these writings fit the characteristics of explanatory discourse most fully. As both Campbell and Blair advocated, Hunt has chosen a text; most of his inscriptions are biblical quotations from such books as the Psalms, Exodus, Isaiah, Matthew, and Revelation. The use of the Scriptures as a text is right in line with the sermonic nature of explanatory rhetoric and clearly meets that qualification. However, Hunt uses other quotations from secular writers such as Shakespeare and Tennyson. These quotations, though certainly not biblical, nonetheless serve as a text that addresses some
form of doctrine or duty, yet another characteristic of explanatory rhetoric. For example, Hunt’s *Lady of Shalott* chooses as its focus the moment of the Lady’s disobedience to the injunction against looking directly outside her bower rather than using the mirror. The quotations detail the effects of this disobedience and the painting itself pictures the havoc resulting from her failed duty. So while Tennyson is not seen as a text of Scripture, his work and Hunt’s visualization of it do indeed address a doctrine of the Church: obedience to authority. Thus, both Hunt’s religious and secular choices of text function as media for the purpose of explanatory discourse: the education of the audience (in this case viewer) in how some doctrine of religion should be understood and then, only after the understanding has been enlightened, how that doctrine should affect the audience’s lives.

**METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE**

A multi-pronged approach was necessary to study this instance of rhetoric fully. First, I gathered as exhaustive a catalog of textual usage as possible by visiting as many galleries holding Hunt’s works as possible during the timeframe for this study. While there are many art catalogs and treatments on Pre-Raphaelite art, few of these books and articles reproduce the frames of any works. Though the presence of verbal text is often mentioned in these catalogs, it is often unclear whether these verbal texts appeared on the frame or in the catalogs of the exhibition or on the chat labels of the museum walls. So I had to see first hand where the inscriptions lie. Thus, a major part of my research was archival, both in actual galleries and in the use of original sources which detail Hunt’s design processes—sources such as diaries, correspondence, and original exhibition catalogs.

Secondly, I limited my study to only Hunt’s oil paintings which have inscriptions on the frame. This narrowing of scope allowed me to more fully examine the function of the
inscriptions as explanatory rhetoric. Hunt was a prolific artist, working in oils, watercolors, and pencil. Narrowing the scope of this study in this way meant that I examined the works that the public would have seen, a natural audience for Hunt to “preach” to. He continued to exhibit even in the light of the strong criticism that the Brotherhood drew from the artistic establishment of the time. Rossetti, on the other hand, stopped exhibiting publicly after the scathing reviews of the second exhibition of his work. So, while he continued to place verbal text upon his frames and in some cases on the painting itself, his work was not intended to have as wide an audience as Hunt’s did.

Thirdly, because of his position as one of the founders of the PRB, Hunt has been studied, though not as thoroughly as one would expect. Little has been done with these inscriptions; most critical works merely note that they reflect the content of the painting or some other general comment. This gap in the study of Hunt’s work makes my study worthwhile on more than one front. In addition, the attention that Hunt has garnered means that there are numerous primary sources generally available. Among these is Hunt’s own memoir of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. Several sets of correspondence between Hunt and influential men such as John Ruskin are also readily available. And of course, there are numerous secondary sources that discuss Hunt’s work, though none who address it rhetorically. A combination of gallery visits, primary sources, and secondary sources ensured a fairly complete catalog with enough data to make it useful to my in-depth analysis of rhetorical functions. Using the archival materials of journals and correspondence, I was able to determine the some of the kinds of knowledge Hunt drew upon to choose his texts as well as the kind of knowledge he assumed his audience had. Finally, I examined the placement of the texts themselves, to determine if there were a
relationship between the progression of action in the painting and the position of the text in relationship to the viewer.

PROSPECTUS FOR OTHER CHAPTERS

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature examines the work that has been done on Explanatory Rhetoric from a critical standpoint, detailing its historical appearances within the rhetorical tradition. Tracing its history from Augustine to Bacon to Smith then to Campbell and Blair provides a foundation for the examination of Hunt’s nineteenth century performance of this type of rhetoric. In addition, the literature review covers the use of the visual within sermonic practices from the Middle Ages on. The literature review also surveys the work already done on Hunt himself, his use of typological symbolism, his work habits, and his individual works. Finally, this review considers briefly the scholarship on picture frames in general. The conjunction of rhetoric, artist, and tool, not to mention the conjunction of painting and frame, is too close not to examine.

Chapter Three: A Catalog of Inscribed Works consists of large images reproduced from my own photographs or other published sources. These images are only of Hunt’s inscribed works, at least thirteen in number. It was crucial to my study that the reader be able to see the work as I have in order to consider validly the conclusions which I draw. As part of this catalog, I included basic information about the paintings: date completed, gallery where located, frame maker where known, and a typed transcription of the inscription. It was my goal to provide as complete a catalog as possible, with reproductions of the paintings and frames where possible, reproductions of the work with typed inscriptions where necessary. Though I endeavored to be exhaustive in this catalog, I did not intend to analyze every painting. However, the presence of
works which I did not address provides the reader with ample opportunity to apply the principles of explanatory rhetoric to analyze these other works.

Chapter Four: Inscribed Doctrine looks at five works which detail for the viewer the Christian teachings about Jesus Christ. Four of the five works contain biblical texts as inscriptions. These paintings most clearly exemplify explanatory rhetoric in that they match the criteria given by Campbell and Blair, among which is the choice of a sermon text from the Bible. While these are perhaps most obviously sermonic in nature, they are also among the most controversial of Hunt’s works, both during his lifetime and for critics today. It is also in the paintings that Hunt’s own religious dedication to using his talent as accountable to God is found. Here are the paintings that caused him to journey to the Holy Land four times, not only to fulfill the Pre-Raphaelite tenet of truth to nature, but also because he wished to accurately represent the biblical subject he was using.

Chapter Five: Inscribed Duty examines five works as well; these instruct the viewer in the hierarchy of duty as given in the New Testament and the consequences of failed duty. While not apparently religious in nature—these works include his depictions of scenes in Shakespearean plays and Tennyson’s poetry—they nonetheless meet the criteria of explanatory rhetoric’s purpose and subject matter. While these works do not have biblical texts, it is my contention that their inscriptions nonetheless function as explanatory rhetoric. These paintings have subjects of high moral drama, picturing defining moments of duty. If explanatory rhetoric can be broader than oral sermons, as Blair contends, then it can appear in venues other than churches. The subject, as Campbell urges, is the key, for it is the truth that the viewer/listener must be made to understand. That subject may be a foundational truth present in Scripture though working itself out in everyday life. Blair’s broadening of rhetoric from the spoken to the
written means that it can continue enlarging its boundaries and find itself a new forum in the combination of written and pictorial form.

Chapter Six: Conclusions and Directions for Further Research is the venue of my call for a recognition that rhetoric, as far back as the mid-nineteenth century, was already expanding beyond its common forms, not only into writing but also from preaching into art. A closer examination of this form of rhetoric—explanatory and didactic—may shed light on how its presence in today’s rhetoric may be utilized more effectively. I offer suggestions for examining the subgenre of explanatory rhetoric from the perspective of classical concepts such as *memoria* and *kairos* as well as re-envisioning the field of rhetoric itself based more on purpose than genre. Re-assessing the value of the modes of rhetoric, especially in today’s rich climate of rhetorical purposes, may be a necessary step in deepening the value of the field.

I also offer suggestions for further research into the analysis of Hunt’s works, both from a verbal and visual perspective. His texts in defense of the Pre-Raphaelite movement as well as of his own works lend themselves to a standard rhetorical analysis as well as one focused only on explanatory rhetoric. And there’s no question that my study—focusing on the verbal with a glance at the visual—opens the door for more work on the visual aspects of his rhetorical paintings.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Holman Hunt, as a man of his era, was a complex painter, dedicated to reforming the English view of art and its practice on the one hand, and to portraying the truth in Nature as well as the Truth of Nature. He was a traveled man who ventured to the Middle East during times of unrest and an influential mentor to others in the Brotherhood such as Dante Rossetti who would affect the course of English art and the arts through their own work as well as their broad influence on future painters. He was a man friends with those in religious circles and with those in the burgeoning manufacturing business, a man who defied not only the art world but also Victorian social and legal views on marriage. This multi-faceted man demands a multi-faceted approach to his work. This study reflects both the man and his work, looking at his paintings as rhetorical works that themselves are multi-natured, a mixed medium of art comprised of the verbal and the visual, separate perhaps on the work but inseparable in purpose. Hunt’s frames reflect his unique way of looking at the world and his role in it: on the one hand, there is the painstaking artistic technique which he held to for his entire career; on the other, is the evidence of his values, quoted lines of Scripture and literature that work together to give his works depth of meaning, rewarding the viewer’s careful scrutiny and treasure-stores of learning. Mixing these media, Hunt forges a unified message that extols virtue and encourages reform. This study will look at the numerous forces at work in Hunt’s inscribed art—political, religious, archeological, and moral—and endeavor to understand those cultural forces and illuminate the messages the artist struggled so manfully to communicate.

This chapter reviews the extant literature regarding explanatory rhetoric, the use of the visual in sermon-making, Holman Hunt’s relationship to religion, and the studies on frame-making in general and on Pre-Raphaelite frames in particular. This chapter is divided into five
main sections. First, an overview of the literature concerned with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in general and their use of inscribed texts. Second, an examination of the history of explanatory rhetoric is presented as a justification of the study itself. Third, a history of the use of the visual in sermons is traced in order to provide a concurrent thread that joins with that of explanatory rhetoric in the work of Holman Hunt. Fourth, Hunt’s religious views are given in order to justify placing him in the role of preacher-artist. And finally, a brief look at the impact of framing, both for Pre-Raphaelite art in general and of Hunt’s works in particular, will situate this study in the current scholarship.

THE PRE-RAPHAELITE ARTISTS

The Pre-Raphaelite movement continued in a fashion until the 20th century under the guise of the Aesthetic movement. Because of this chronological breadth as well as the breadth of artists who used Pre-Raphaelite principles in their work, a great deal of critical work has been done not only on the individual members of the PRB but also on various aspects of the movement as well. However, an in-depth examination of the rhetorical uses of this verbal-visual combination of frame and canvas is not present in the literature in any detail.

It is surprising that with all the work done on Pre-Raphaelite art as visual rhetoric (Barringer, Conrad, Landow “Reading”), few critics consider the import of the verbal inscriptions. Seeing the paintings as compositions to be read opens up vast areas of interest in the symbolism and typology prevalent during the Victorian era as well as present in the PRB’s work (Wilton and Upstone, Weninger, Sussman). An exploration of the movement’s use of sign and iconology demonstrates the PRB’s roots in earlier art (McGann). The PRB’s works admirably reflect the visual emphasis of the Victorian era evidenced also in architecture and the book arts; this emphasis has paved the way for detailed analysis of the individual elements of artwork and
their significance from a prominently visual perspective (Flint, Cvetkovich, Hewison). Looking at individual paintings such as Hunt’s *Hireling Shepherd* leads to readings that reflect the artist’s philosophical beliefs as well as his biography (Laurent, Prettejohn). Yet, reading the visual without reading the verbal is reading only half the text.

Though there are numerous volumes of Pre-Raphaelite art in print, few do more than mention the presence of verbal text in conjunction with the work. Comments along the lines of “for some reason Rossetti was self-consciously Italianate when painting the picture, with both the sonnet, inscribed on a scroll at the top right, and the inscription in the lower left, being in Italian” (Rodgers 114) are common. Even Christopher Wood, a renowned scholar on Pre-Raphaelite art, remains satisfied with assigning a captioning function to the inscription, noting that Holman Hunt’s *Light of the World* “illustrates a passage from Revelations” (43). Or he documents the presence of the verbal text—“Exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1852, with a quotation from the Fool in King Lear” (41)—but comments no further. The mention of these inscribed texts without analysis of their purpose creates a gap in the knowledge about the practices of these influential painters. Though much work has been done on these painters (Hilton, Marsh), in matters from their botanical accuracy (Treuherz *Victorian*) to their deep symbolism (Landow *Victorian Types*), from their use of color to their use of literature (Jeffers, Wootton), from their social activism to their mysticism—no in-depth discussion of the verbal texts so closely allied to their visual text has been made. I find it difficult to believe that these artists would carefully construct the visual elements of their works, often designing the frames themselves, and not purposefully select the verbal text.

Even gallery exhibition catalogs do little to analyze the presence of these texts. The catalogs from the major collections in England and here in the United States may record the
presence of these texts, but look no farther into their use. Catalogs from the Tate Gallery, London; the Manchester City Art Galleries; the Guildhall, London; the Walker Gallery, Liverpool; the Delaware Art Gallery; the Victoria and Albert, London; the Merseyside Galleries, Northern England; and the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery make note of the inscriptions but rarely do more. The lack of analysis by even the scholars connected to major galleries makes a deeper look at these texts worthwhile.

In addition to the critical studies of the symbolism and typology present in the PRB’s works, some work has been done specifically on their designs for the frames of their works. Here, one would expect, is the logical venue for an analysis of the verbal texts present there. However, the majority of the work has been done on the ornamental elements of the frames: the half-moons, pansies, arrows, and other carvings. The preservation of original frames with the painting is a matter of great concern to museum curators, and the discussion among these scholars concerns itself with the history of the frame, not its composition (Cowdrey, Lynn Roberts, Cannon-Brookes). Even a collection from a symposium on frames—*The Rhetoric of the Frame*—concerns itself with the philosophy and psychology of framing in general, failing to discuss the PRB’s use of the frame at all (Duro).

To say that little has been done to analyze the use of the inscriptions is not to say that nothing has been done at all. Eva Mendgen discusses the presence of text on several members’ frames, but her focus is, again, on the ornamental elements of the frame and on the history of the picture frame in general. The very sweep of her discussion (1850-1920) limits the amount of analysis she is able to do. And she does examine Dante Rossetti’s and Holman Hunt’s work in the most detail. The leading authority on Holman Hunt, Judith Bronkhurst, as one would expect, has looked carefully at Hunt’s frames—both the design and the inscriptions—in her dissertation
and in her forthcoming book, in press even as my study is being completed. This volume promises to be the most comprehensive book on Hunt, combining a catalog of his works with in-depth analysis of his works. However, this book is based partially on her dissertation done for the Courtauld Institute in London, a work that merely notes the presence of the verbal texts on the frames, much like the other gallery catalogs. With that precedent, it is likely that her upcoming volume will not look at these inscriptions as rhetorical texts, teaching the viewer both verbally and visually the duties and doctrines of their religious faith. Seeing Hunt as a preacher-artist embodying explanatory rhetoric is a viewpoint that critics have overlooked to this point.

THE HISTORY OF EXPLANATORY RHETORIC

Robert Connors lays out a timeline of the major figures of explanatory rhetoric, but it is possible to insert other practitioners and commentators whose discussions add valuable insight into the components and principles of this branch of rhetoric. Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian all included a narratio section in the prescribed format for rhetoric; however, this section was to be brief and followed immediately by a lengthy and fully developed argumentative section. Thus, these fathers of ancient rhetoric admitted a kind of explanatory element into their rhetoric, but downplayed it in two ways: first, by its cursory nature and secondly, by emphasizing the next segment of the oration. Connors notes several facts about explanatory rhetoric; among them is that “it was not an important aim of discourse” (28). In fact, “explanation was not, in essence, considered a high-level skill” (28). This privileging of persuasion over information remains throughout most of the history of explanatory rhetoric even though later rhetorical authorities give explanation a higher value.

George Kennedy traces the history of classical rhetoric specifically in the Christian arena. In doing so, he call 3rd century Origen “the greatest Christian thinker between Paul and
Augustine” (157). Origen’s *On First Principles* considers Scripture to have three levels: the first is “corporeal” or a literal level that “imparts edification (knowledge of religious law and history, for example)” (158). Knowledge and understanding by the audience are seen as fundamental concerns of the preacher. Origen’s ranking of edification as the most basic level is commensurate with the emphasis, which the ancients give to explanation. While the upper levels of Scripture are the primary domain of the preacher, they rest on the foundation of knowledge though little attention is given to how that knowledge is imparted. The homily, Origen’s specialty, points up this hierarchy of presentation: “the speaker is mindful to persuade his audience not only to understand and believe the text but to live in accordance with it” (160). Even in definition of the speaker’s roles, persuasion is privileged over teaching, but that teaching is inextricably linked with the call to action.

Fourth century Augustine is the next major figure to address the nature of explanatory rhetoric. In *On the Teacher* he declares that “persuasion cannot be accomplished by rhetorical means unless the truth is first known or simultaneously revealed by divine grace” (Kennedy 173). This rhetorician-turned-preacher makes clearer the dependence which persuasion has on information, though he does not clearly address all the sources of knowledge, from which the preacher can draw, aside from God. The implication is that the preacher is first taught himself; then in turn he teaches his flock. Augustine’s major work *On Christian Learning* begins Book One with the statement, “There are two things necessary to the treatment of the Scriptures: a way of discovering those things which are to be understood, and a way of teaching what we have learned” (Robertson 7). Here Augustine more clearly addresses the teaching aspect of explanatory rhetoric. The foundational assumption about the role of teaching in rhetoric is elaborated on in Book Four with Augustine’s quoting of Cicero’s injunction: “To teach is a
necessity, to please is a sweetness, to persuade is a victory” (136). The thread of the rhetorical fathers is referenced and then applied to preaching. Augustine emphasizes: “Instruction should come before persuasion” (137). This ordering of the rhetorical process clearly places teaching before persuasion. He continues, “It is necessary therefore for the ecclesiastical orator, when he urges that something be done, not only to teach that he may instruct and to please that he may hold attention, but also to persuade that he may be victorious” (138). In section XX of Book Four, Augustine develops this theme: “It is relevant to teaching not only to explain those things that are hidden and to solve the difficulties of questions, but also, . . . to introduce other questions” (147). The tutoring of the audience is progressive; one facet of knowledge taught leads to others. He addresses the styles with which preacher-orators can address their audiences, proclaiming that “the hard heart is to be bent to obedience through the grandness of the diction, if what is heard is not heard intelligently and willingly, it cannot be heard obediently” (164).

Again, knowledge precedes persuasion and is fundamental to action. Clearly, Augustine gives more weight than his predecessors to the teaching aspect of rhetoric. Earlier, he notes that “if those who hear are to be taught, exposition must be composed, if it is needed, that they may become acquainted with the subject at hand” (121). Only after the necessary knowledge is expounded, does Augustine address “those who hear [who] are to be moved” (121). So, Origen’s “understanding” becomes fully implemented by Augustine’s directions to preachers.

Harry Caplan’s survey of rhetoric and the *ars praedicandi* notes that “a ninth-century manuscript . . . progresses as far as to list seven *modi* of preaching”; the first is “by teaching disciples” (79). As disciples, the audience is clearly already converted. In this role, they need instruction in the tenets of the faith, not a missionary sermon. The usefulness of classical rhetoric is acknowledged in Rabanus’ *De clericorum instructione* which states, “Rhetoric, by which I
understand the art of speaking well in civil questions, which seems to belong to mundane science, still is not extraneous to ecclesiastical discipline, for skill in this art is useful to the preacher for fluent and proper teaching, as well as for apt and elegant writing, and for delivering a sermon. He does well who learns it fully, and so fits himself to preach God’s word” (Caplan 81-82). This teacher of preachers clearly considers teaching to be a crucial part of the preacher’s office; indeed, it seems to be set apart from sermonizing as a separate duty of the preacher.

Caplan continues his survey with Alain de Lille whose definition of preaching is as follows: “Preaching is open and public instruction in faith and morals, devoted to the informing of men, originating in the way of reason and proceeding from the source of authorities” (86). This preacher of the 12th century clearly continues the thread of teaching as a fundamental aspect of preaching, going so far as to define preaching as instruction.

He is followed in the 13th century by John of Wales who says, “Preaching consists of invoking God’s aid and then suitably, clearly, and devoutly expounding a proposed theme by means of division and concordance; its aim being the catholic enlightenment of the intellect and the enkindling, with grace, of emotion” (Caplan 87). The introduction of the divisions of a sermon, a division that bears a likeness to that of the classical oration as set forth by the ancients, uses the term “expounding” rather than “explanatory.” But the goal is still first education of the intellect, then generated motivation by appeals to the passions. This structured approach, called thematic preaching, “was not directed at converting the audience. The congregation was assumed to believe in Christ, as the vast majority of the people in medieval Europe did. The preacher instructs them about the meaning of the Bible” (Kennedy 223), echoing the address to the disciples as seen in the 9th century’s seven modi of preaching.
Another major figure of the *ars praedicandi* is Robert of Basevorn. Though Connors considers that there were “no advances in any conception of a theory of informative discourse” (29) for 1500 years after Augustine (5th century), this writer of the major treatise on preaching in the 14th century “provides so ‘typical’ an *ars* that his *Forma praedicandi* is sometimes seen as the exemplar of the whole theory” (Murphy xx). Murphy continues his commentary on this branch of rhetoric in the Middle Ages by noting that in 1230-31 “a number of Latin sermons were preached at the University of Paris using a new and remarkably standardized format employing a ‘theme’ (Scriptural quotation) and a complex process of division and amplification worked out from the opening quotation” (xviii). This introduction of the “thematic” sermon was much more stylized and formal than the homily of Origen’s day. This structured approach was also called the “university-style sermon” because of its direct connection to the educational system. It is significant, I think, that this development in a branch of rhetoric which gives new standing to the instruction of the congregation is labeled with a title so distinctly educational.

After this flood of newly styled sermons, there was a “rapid spread of the specialized manuals of the new *ars praedicandi* during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries” (xviii). This new development in preaching was popular enough to generate “nearly three hundred authors of such manuals” though Murphy notes that “very little is known of the immediate antecedents of the formal *ars praedicandi* as a preceptive form” (xvii). Like Connors, Murphy notes that there was a gap of more than a millennium after the Christian era began without “a specialized body of rhetorical precepts to aid preachers” (xvii-xviii).

Though these 1200-1500 years had advocates of preaching and teaching such as Augustine, there was no real formal manual of preaching until that of Robert of Basevorn. And indeed, Basevorn does little to emphasize the instructive nature of preaching. Though he states,
“Since preaching and teaching are necessary for the Church of God, that science which presents the form of preaching artistically is equally necessary, or even more so” (114). He continues with a definition of preaching that reverts to the persuasion emphasis of the rhetorical past:

“Preaching is the persuasion of many, within a moderate length of time, to meritorious conduct” (120). He delineates the “determin[ing of] questions” as “not preaching, because it is not persuasion by intent, but rather an investigation of truth” (120). Here though he gives the nod to teaching as an integral part of the Church, he nevertheless considers preaching to be primarily persuasion to action.

Thus, though Basevorn significantly contributes to the art of preaching through his influential manual of the art, he does not broaden the purposes of preaching as greatly. His contribution to this study lies in his detailed instructions about the parts of a sermon, specifically the choice of theme (or text) and its discussion. In his elaborate discussion of the Introduction, Basevorn lays out a variety of methods for its creation. First he allows authority for the Introduction to come “from something original, from a philosopher, a poet, or someone with authority” (155). Then he discusses the actual construction of the Introduction. Under the method “by argument” he permits “example,” detailing three sources for these examples: “in nature, in art, in history” (155). It is this example from art, which Basevorn then delineates with the example of a doctor healing the sick, that hints at the possible inclusion of illustrative art in a sermon. The authority of the poet then the example of the art of medicine leaves the possibility of the artist as yet another source for the material of the Introduction. At the end of Basevorn’s work, he addresses “two other methods [of preaching], which must be set apart by themselves because they are extraordinary” (205). He notes that the first method “belongs in part to the Parisian method and in part to that of Gregory” (205). In this method, the preacher develops his
theme, again through “examples, [but now] in nature, in figure, in history” (206). As an example for “in figure,” Basevorn details an “example in art [which] is some pinnacle built too high, especially if the base or column supporting it is too slender or weak” (206). This preaching manual recommends the field of architecture as a source for developing the truths of a sermon. Consequently, it is no great stretch to expand the possibilities for sermon construction from architecture to art.

Erasmus is another influence whom Connors does not include in his survey of explanatory rhetoric. Yet this “key figure in the Renaissance” (Bizzell and Herzberg 585) wrote Ecclesiastes or The Preacher, or The Theory of Public Speaking which “religious historian John W. O’Malley sees . . . as nothing short of revolutionary . . . [since] this work single-handedly routed the medieval thematic sermon” (Bizzell and Herzberg 584). Erasmus still calls for structure in the sermon but allows for more variation than in the university-style sermon. Though he may have recommended new sermon organization, Erasmus maintains the educational aspect of preaching:

But the preacher is especially occupied with teaching, with persuasion, with exhortation, consolation, advice and admonition. I am not unaware that teaching is involved in all cases and status, but I have decided to separate it for my present purpose. Our purpose in teaching is to have our hearer understand, such as when we demonstrate through scripture and through argument that God is incorporeal, that the human soul is immortal. (630)

Erasmus furthers the concept of explanatory rhetoric in two ways: 1) it is an integral part of all the roles of the preacher, and 2) it is associated with doctrine (of the nature of God and man). So, by 1535 the key components of explanatory rhetoric are present and even emphasized by major rhetorical authorities.
Connors returns to the historical tracing of explanatory rhetoric in the 17th century with Francis Bacon in whom “we find the seeds that will develop into a rhetoric of explanatory discourse” (29). In Bacon, Connors identifies the “Method of Tradition or Delivery” as “Baconian terms for the sort of rational knowledge ‘which is transitive, concerning the expressing or transferring of our knowledge to others’” (29). Bacon’s ideas are developed by the Royal Society of London, which advocates plain statement of facts without stylistic excesses. Connors sees in Thomas Sprat’s writings the Society’s avowal to “‘render it [the knowledge of Nature] an instrument, whereby Mankind may obtain a Dominion over Things’” (30); the establishment of “Dominion over Things” “was to be henceforth one of the primary purposes of explanation” (30). Sprat proclaims the Society’s goal to use knowledge to produce more knowledge which in turn leads to works. Another member of the Society, John Locke, according to Connors, also denigrates rhetoric, instead advocating instruction as the “basic type of discourse” (31). These members of the 17th century are accompanied by foreign figures such as Fenelon who notes that “instruction is the proper end of speech” (Connors 26). Here at last, instruction has finally triumphed over persuasion as the goal of speech.

In the 18th century, Adam Smith contributes to the concept of explanatory rhetoric by advocating what he called “the didactic.” Connors quotes Smith as laying out the didactic as an effort to “‘prove some proposition. . . . [It] put[s] before us the arguments on both sides of the question in their true light . . . in view to persuade no further than the arguments themselves appear convincing. . . . [I]nstruction is the main end’” (32). With this clear statement of the changed purpose of rhetoric to be instructive rather than mainly persuasive, the ground is set for the rhetorical authorities of the eighteenth century and their lasting impact upon the nineteenth.
Connors bases his article on the emergence of explanatory rhetoric in the works of George Campbell and Hugh Blair. The widening definition of rhetoric to encompass more than mere speaking accompanies the widening of religious rhetoric’s purpose to be more than conversion. Connors states, “There is strong evidence that the study of pulpit oratory, of which Campbell’s Lectures are a popular representative, was the radical principle behind the practical study of methods of explanation in rhetoric” (34). The promulgation of explanatory rhetoric is accounted for by the popularity of pulpit rhetoric. Campbell states,

First, then, in order to effect the reformation of men, that is, in order to bring them to a right disposition and practice, there are some things which of necessity they must be made to know. No one will question, that the knowledge of the nature and extent of the duties which they are required to practice, and of the truths and doctrines which serve as motives to practice, is absolutely necessary. The explication of these in the pulpit forms a species of discourses which falls under the first class above mentioned. It is addressed to the understanding, its aim is information, the only obstacle it hath to remove is ignorance. Sermons of this sort we shall henceforth distinguish by the term explanatory. (qtd. in Connors 34)

The repeated elements of the intellect—understanding, information, remove ignorance—clearly foreground explanatory sermons in the efforts of the preacher to educate his congregation before he urges them to action. Pulpit rhetoric, then, privileges knowledge before action, and even before conversion; for without knowledge of their lack of a Saviour, unregenerate mankind will never become members of the catholic Church.

This lengthy survey of the growth of explanatory rhetoric demonstrates the path of development from persuasion to information-accompanied-by-persuasion to pure information
that was taken in religious oratory. Clearly, the seeds of didactic rhetoric are present in the changing roles of the Church in history. As the influence of the Church widened, the leadership found it necessary to instruct more than persuade. As the influence of the Church waned, the leadership needed to win converts more than to disciple believers. Of course, there was overlap in these goals, for the religious orator’s job is a process: once the heathen are converted, they must be firmly grounded in the scriptures in order to remain in right relationship with God. But it is easy to see that as in most history, a cycle takes place with the prevalence of explanatory rhetoric waxing and waning; more present in the medieval era then regaining strength in Victorian times. However, it is also clear that at no time was the notion of sermons as explanatory forms of rhetoric entirely absent. The growth of rational thought in the Neoclassic age merely prepared the ground for the resurgence of explanatory rhetoric in the 1800s. The lectures of Campbell and Blair enriched the field of rhetoric by enlarging its sphere and its purposes. This wider vision was necessary groundwork for the missionary movement of the British Empire which of necessity mandated both conversion and instruction of the nations under its influence.

THE HISTORY OF THE VISUAL IN SERMONS

Concurrent with the thread of the development of explanatory rhetoric is the integration of the visual into the field of rhetoric itself. Classical rhetoric used the visual as part of its persuasive power from the time of the ancients onward. Gorgias’ Encomium of Helen presents a slight twist on the myth: it is not Helen’s beauty that causes the Trojan War, but rather Paris’ beauty which attracts the attention and causes the actions of Helen. And it is the power of sight which serves as her defense. This power, Gorgias says, is actually greater than the power of speech. So, the conjunction of sight and beauty is a tool of history and the shaper of man’s
destiny. And in the case of this classical rhetor, the visual is the capstone of his argument and the means of his persuasion.

The term *ekphrasis* is another instance of the power of sight’s being harnessed to the reason of rhetoric. Vivid word pictures within an oration stir the passions of the hearers and make the rhetor’s job more successful. The visual can stir more than the emotions; it can also stir the memory, a point which Gorgias also makes: “Through sight the soul receives an impression even in its inner features. . . . The sight engraves upon the mind images of things which have been seen. And many frightening impressions linger, and what lingers is exactly analogous to <what is> spoken” (46). Remembrance of terrors is not the only thing the visual stimulates. That power can be made positive as well. Mary Carruthers and Francis Yates thoroughly develop the prominent part that the visual played in the medieval scholastic tradition. These rhetors in the spiritual field rather than the secular used visual images to organize their *copia*, the vast store of knowledge, which, due to the scarcity of books, they had to memorize in order to possess.

Without a good memory, a monk or preacher was useless as an orator, for he was naturally limited in the scope and sequence of his speech. Even the description of an orator’s memory is a visual image: “The memory of an orator is like a storehouse of inventoried topics that ideally would contain all previous ways-of-saying ethical truths like ‘justice,’ ‘fortitude,’ ‘temperance,’ from which he draws in order to fit words to yet another occasion, requiring another way-of-saying” (Carruthers 26). The ‘inventoried topics’ are arranged in a visual pattern than allows the orator to locate any idea at any time in any order. Common patterns were banqueting tables with the facts arranged as guests around them, gardens laid out in logical and orderly fashion, and even the geographical features of a town. To aid retention the “arts of memory” are vitally connected “to manuscript painting conventions, the *Bestiary*, and various conventions of
pictorial diagrams” (Carruthers 123). Carruthers states that “the Bestiary [sic] was thought of as a beginner’s book, an entertaining way of retaining moral precepts” (126). In the Middle Ages, as Carruthers points out, is the connection of the visual and moral training; rhetoric is not merely the ability to remember and deliver a speech, but is actual instruction in moral doctrine.

An extension of the role which the visual played in medieval times is presented in a collection of essays entitled Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages. Augustine Thompson notes that “artistic motifs and models as a window into hearers’ visualizations remain relatively unexplored” (34). In addition, Phyllis Roberts discusses the idea of the “medieval exemplum as an illustrative story” (54). These rhetorical tools were like the commonplaces of Aristotle’s topoi, places the preacher could go to for the material of his sermon. Now the preacher has not only a topic suggested by the topoi, he also has a way to make that topic seem real to his audience through a developed example.

More telling is Nirit Ben-Aryeh Debby’s research on the use which Italian preachers made of the visual arts themselves in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. He has located sources which not only describe the use of or references to visual artwork in sermons of the time but also sources which prescribe how artwork should be used. According to Johannes Balbus, “an image had three functions: the first was to instruct the ignorant and the illiterate, the second was to keep alive the memory of the mysteries of the faith and the examples of the saints, and the third was to act as a means of inspiring devotion” (Debby 129). The first two uses are not new: a knowledge of stained glass cathedral windows will evidence the idea of visuals as teaching devices; medieval memory techniques have already been discussed; and the idea of the visual as a devotional aid is also obvious considering the portrayal of divine figures in the great works of art such as the Sistine Chapel from this period. So the preacher who considers referring to
artwork in his sermon must determine which, if any, or how many of these purposes his reference will serve. However, it is important to note that the visual is an aid to communicate truth; it does not take the place of truth. There are also “various moral and pragmatic considerations: whether art is in accordance with theology, whether it is good for the Christian soul, whether from a pragmatic perspective works of art are useful as didactic instruments and transmit a religious message in an instructive manner” (Debby 130). These foundational decisions must be resolved before individual artworks can be evaluated. Dominici (1356-1419) advocated that “a mother should keep pictures and sculptures of biblical figures in her house in order to educate her children” (Debby 133). He warns, however, “that painting of the angels and saints is permitted and ordained, for the mental utility of the lowest . . . but the sacred scriptures are mainly for the most perfect” (Debby 133). This established hierarchy clearly places the image lower than the Bible, though it can be useful to explain that text. Bernardino of Siena (1380-1444) not only urged the use of the visual in sermons, referring by name to several known works in his own messages but also creating “the visual image the ‘Holy Name of Jesus’ . . . an emblem combining the letters IHS surrounded by rays of light against a blue background, which had mystical origins in the thought of earlier Franciscans” (Debby 136). This combination of preacher and artist is a forerunner of what I believe William Holman Hunt is doing.

The reformer Savonarola was also quite interested in art for its own sake as well as for its uses in the pulpit. “The place of the fine arts in Savonarola’s technique and philosophy of preaching is twofold. On the one hand, he lectured on the Bible in a simple manner that excluded descriptions of artworks as sermon exempla; on the other hand he used art in a unique way, to explain his philosophy of religious rhetoric” (Debby 149). This conjunction of the visual and rhetoric, now theory as well as illustration, is balanced by a warning like that of Dominici’s; art
is inferior to the Scriptures though it may convey a scriptural message. Debby points out that “Savonarola constantly drew parallels between the vocation of the preacher and that of the artist and suggested a kind of rivalry as well as identification between the two professions” (150). Clearly, in medieval times the concept of “art for art’s sake” was tempered by an understanding of its powerful role in communicating ideas vital to man’s aesthetic and spiritual soul.

Lest it seem that only the Italians made this connection between preaching and art, between the rhetor and the artist, Miriam Gill examines the presence of art works both in the sermons and in the churches of the late Middle Ages in England. “Medieval apologists sometimes described monumental art such as wall paintings as ‘muta predicatio’ or ‘silent preaching’” (155). Spencer expounds on this concept: “meditating on a religious image was presented as ‘synonymous with reading and hearing God’s word’” (qtd. in Gill). As evidence of the propriety of using art in sermons, Gill offers Robert of Basevorn’s suggestion that sermon illustrations could come from “nature, in art [and] in history,” a reference which has already been made in this paper (163). The conjunction between the sermon as instructive and the visual as sermonic material strengthens my contention that in later centuries William Holman Hunt’s inscribed paintings bring together these threads in a more visual, but not less sermonic fashion. The authoritative nature of Basevorn’s preaching manual adds weight to his teaching about both of these subjects. Gill goes on to pull in yet another medieval thread: according to a sermon by Hugh Legate which referred to several detailed descriptions of artworks, the viewers were expected to be well able to understand “hybrid images” created by the preacher from accepted iconography. Thus, they “were expected to have a good visual memory of religious art . . . and also expected to assemble complex images in their imagination, possibly in order to help them
remember the theme of the sermon” (164-5). Here the art becomes not only illustration, but also content and memory device as well.

An important stepping-stone to my assertion about Hunt’s role as an artist-preacher of explanatory rhetoric is Gill’s discussion that poems were used in sermons to raise the audience’s passions and reactions to the sermon. The telling detail is that lines from these poems were placed in close relationship to artwork on the cathedral wall. For example, one popular couplet appeared “in St. Alban’s Cathedral beneath a painting of Doubting Thomas” and was “probably displayed beneath an image of the Crucifixion . . . in Westminster Abbey,” as well as “beneath, ‘a curious picture representing the whole Passion of Christ’ recorded in Hatfield Parish Church in the West Riding of Yorkshire” (Gill 168). Here verbal inscriptions and visual images are paired in order to reinforce the sermon in the minds and hearts of the hearers. The placement of some of these images and texts is significant. Gill discusses their placement “on the north side of the church . . . [which] was the side of the church frequently, although not exclusively, associated with the pulpit” (175). In placement, in reference, and in content, instances of pictorial rhetoric were prominent in the religious world of the medieval citizen. Gill summarizes her research with the following:

Preachers allegorised religious images, enlivened their sermons with verbal echoes of visual representations and presented strategies for interpreting images or constellations of images. Murals deployed didactic images derived from sermon exempla to address important concerns. They shared the catechetical and Christological emphasises of sermons, and may even have presented the visual equivalent of sermon form. They were not mere ‘sermon illustrations.’ (179)
So by the end of the Middle Ages, artworks were an integral part of the religious life of both preacher and audience. The cooperation between image and text functioned to reinforce as well as communicate biblical truth, truth that instructed parishioners in the doctrines and teachings of the Church. This usefulness of art would resurface later in rhetorical history as so many other elements of the Middle Ages also made their way back into teaching and preaching.

In the Renaissance, the visual came to be made a part of the structure of orations as well as being their illustrations. Walter Ong notes that the Renaissance orator Ramus devised a “Method” for organizing a speech, a scheme designed to improve delivery and effect. “And in its resort to diagrams and other visual models to establish the idea of order—a procedure encouraged both by scholastic logic and by typography—it marked a significant movement away from the world of voice favored by the rhetorical tradition” (“Tudor” 64). The door opens a crack here for a prominent facet of today’s rhetoric: visual rhetoric. But there is more to the foundation of the visual in rhetoric, not only in organization, but also in content. Ong continues, “Related to commonplace collections and the rhetoric of invention is a special genre combining literature and the visual arts: the emblem books . . . accompanied by appropriate mottoes, verses, and elaborate prose analyses (“Tudor” 61). This conjunction of the visual and the rhetorical brings into play more than mere visual locations as the building block of a speech; here the speech is actually constructed of both verbal and visual elements. “The emblematists’ concern with iconography and all sorts of symbolism is intimately related to rhetorical and dialectical word play and to rhetorical ‘ornament’”(Ong “Tudor” 61). Though at this stage in the history of rhetoric, the visual is used more to illustrate than to communicate the message, there is definite progress being made toward a visual rhetoric, argument by sight as well as by sound. This secular juncture of word and image will find its way into the religious realm as well.
The Spanish friars also utilized the visual in their efforts to convert and proselytize the colonies of the New World. In particular, Diego Valadés, a native of New Spain, wrote *Rhetorica Christiana* (1579), a discussion of rhetorical practices as amended for the specific purpose of missionary work. The work records the principles used in the New World as well as those taught to the students of rhetoric resulting from the friars’ educational as well as missionary work. The importance of Valadés’ work is obvious from the appearance of his work; it is amply illustrated with his own engravings. These engravings demonstrate the crucial nature of the visual in the culture of the Mexica. The friars learned through a grounding in and appreciation of the culture of their charges that the visual was an integral part of the lore-maintenance of these people. So, the “preachers made use of large illustrated screens (*lienzos*, literally ‘linens’) as a backdrop to their sermons, allowing the speaker to point to the particular concept or event under discussion” (Abbott 48). This method incorporated the concepts of illustration, memory, and instruction for a populace that was familiar with the visual and already relied upon it to communicate their own history. Valadés and his fellow missionaries found that “the use of pictorial representations proved to a ‘graceful and fruitful’ way to present the word of God to an indigenous audience” (Abbott 49). Valadés’ own art, illustrating his *Rhetorica*, was not unlike the art of major figures of the Renaissance, “especially Albrecht Dürer” (Abbott 56). This confluence of rhetoric and artist, both in Valadés’ own vocation as well as in the worlds of Renaissance Europe and New World Mexico is a significant step toward the explanatory rhetoric of Holman Hunt. As Abbott concludes: “Actual images must be joined with mental images for persuasion to be more effective. Again, among the Indians the screens used by the Franciscans were more than clever devices; they were essential to the rhetorical process. They worked where words alone could not” (56). This passage reflects the power that Gorgias assigned to sight as well as the memory
devices of the monks. In it as well, I believe, is principle behind the power of Holman Hunt’s works. In the Victorian age of spectacle evidenced by the rise of public museums, the popularity of the Crystal Palace exhibition, and the increasing fashionableness of private art collecting, the juncture of the visual and the verbal in Hunt’s works is not only powerful, it is also prescribed.

By the Victorian age, we have several concepts resurrected from the Dark Ages. Among them is this joint office of preacher and artist. In a series of lectures at the end of the nineteenth century to the Cambridge Divinity School, W. Boyd Carpenter urges, “There is illumination in illustration” (126). This return to the medieval exemplum is recommended for the same reason it was used centuries before: anything that the rhetor/preacher can do to help his audience understand the theme of the oration is welcome. Using illustrations that the audience can relate to is among these techniques. Carpenter continues extolling the virtues of illustrations:

“Imagination links thought with life, translates for the audience the abstract into the concrete, and shows how the principles which were strong and vivid in the sacred story have their living message for our own day” (127). This theoretical approach to sermon construction links not only the visual and the verbal, it also links the past with the present—how the ages-old scriptures have a relevance to those living in the present. And what else would the preacher want to make relevant but doctrine and duty, the core teachings of the Bible. Carpenter then sums up his recommendations with what else? A visual illustration—“Let him [the preacher] bethink himself whether his sermon is not all walls and no windows; and if so, let him take pains by illustration or example or story to let in the light” (127). Enlightenment, for the church congregation of the Victorian age, comes as much through visual illustration as biblical revelation. Another preaching manual of this period sums up these ideas perfectly.
Does anyone ask, for instance, what on earth pictures can have to do with sermon-making? I answer (may I say from long experience?), a very great deal indeed, since many of the qualities that go to make an artist, or that help us to appreciate his art, are invaluable aids to a sermon. The way, for instance, in which a great picture strikes the imagination with the breadth and width of the world . . . helps you almost for the first time to appreciate, and ever afterwards to retain,—all go to quicken the sensibilities, to open the pores of the entire spiritual being” (Ellicott 13-14).

This preacher connects the threads of art, preaching, and memory in order to help the preacher fulfill his responsibility to make the biblical teaching relevant to the audience and more than that, to make it efficacious through having a lasting effect. Using the visual not only helps the congregation understand the principles of scripture; the visual helps them remember the principles in order to facilitate change in their actions. Given the success of medieval preaching around the world, instruction about doctrine when combined with the visual proved to bring about lasting rhetorical effects.

**HUNT AS PREACHER-ARTIST**

The Victorian viewpoint toward Art is significant. F. G. Stephens, a member of the PRB and an art critic, refers to the artist as a “priest” (“Purpose” 60), proclaiming, “The Arts have always been most important moral guides” (“Purpose” 61). John Ruskin continues in this vein: “when the entire purpose of art was moral teaching, it naturally took truth for its first object, and beauty, and the pleasure resulting from beauty, only for its second” (“Pre-Raphaelitism” 95). Quentin Bell states, England “needed something with a strong religious purpose, expressed in a strong religious manner. It needed a kind of art which could satisfy not only its spiritual but its social aspirations” (17). Contextualizing this attitude, Ruskin describes the art of the Middle
Ages this way: “all ancient art was religious, and all modern art is profane . . . that is to say, religion was its first object; private luxury or pleasure its second. . . . [Now] private luxury or pleasure is its first object; religion its second.” (“Pre-Raphaelitism” 93). He identifies 1500 as the watershed year in which “this entire system was changed. Instead of the life of Christ, men had, for the most part, to paint the lives of Bacchus and Venus” (“Pre-Raphaelitism” 94). He decries “the loss of moral purpose” stating that “in mediaeval art, thought is the first thing, execution the second; in modern art execution is the first thing, and thought the second. And again, in mediaeval art, truth is first, beauty second” (“Pre-Raphaelitism” 97) and in the modern age, the two are reversed. He closes with the visual image which reinforces the chronological peak: “The medieaval principles led up to Raphael, and the modern principles lead down from him” (“Pre-Raphaelitism” 97). Quentin Bell agrees with this assessment: “the painters of the age before Raphael were superior, morally, to the modern; but the moderns were technically superior to them” (21). This disconnect between spirituality and technology is a fault which Hunt and the PRB attempt to remedy. The painstaking PRB techniques couple with Hunt’s devout desire to fulfill the role of the artist as he saw it, giving “a national talisman for the conquest of ignorance and brutality . . . [and] warn[ing] the people from the cramping distortions of the ephemeral tastes of the day? the fashion for such frivolity being the mark of the corruption of original sin” (Hunt I: xiii-xiv). As has been established, Holman Hunt was acknowledged by both his contemporaries and today’s critics to be the only lasting member of the Brotherhood to remain true to their principles. He is acknowledged to be the most religious of the Brotherhood as well: “Holman Hunt remained faithful to the original pictorial and pious impulses” of the Brotherhood (Marsh Women 18).
But Hunt was not always a staunch believer—in either Art or God. It is telling, I think, that the words of an artist and the verbal description of a piece of artwork formed his attitudes toward each of these. In his memoir, Hunt relates his initial church-going experiences: “three services into one with the reiteration of prayers palled upon me, while the stories that I had met with in Fox’s *Book of Martyrs* of the persecution of dissenters by ecclesiastical authority in the Merry Monarch’s days made me listen to the praises of a wonderful Nonconformist preacher” (I: 25). However, after delightedly taking notes for weeks, Hunt discovered that the preacher’s eloquence was a result of patterned rhetoric and believed that he “had reached the bottom of the preacher’s mine of wisdom, and that I was listening only to a learned parrot” (I: 25). As a result he forsook church altogether for painting out of doors on these weekly days off. Artistically, Hunt records that he “sought . . . the power of undying appeal to the hearts of living men. Much of the favourite art left the inner self untouched” (I: 48). But he was to search no longer.

In 1847 Hunt’s world changed, for a friend borrowed for him volume two or John Ruskin’s *Modern Painters*, which changed his ideas about art and religion. In Ruskin’s work, Hunt encountered the artistic sage and critic of the day espousing a return to what he believed was the true role of the artist. Hunt records that “[u]p to that day I had been compelled to think that the sober modern world tolerated art only as a sort of vagabondish cleverness” (I: 73). Hunt records the discussion he and John Millais had about Ruskin’s text:

He [Ruskin] feels the power and responsibility of art more than any author I have ever read. He describes pictures of the Venetian School in such a manner that you see them with your inner sight, and you feel that the men who did them had been appointed by God, like old prophets, to bear a sacred message, and that they delivered themselves like Elijah of old. . . . I speak of it now because the men he describes were of such high
purpose and vigour that they present a striking contrast to the uninspired men of to-day. 
This shows need for us young artists to consider what course we should follow. That art 
is dying at times is beyond question. . . . [T]he book I speak of helps one to see the 
difference between dead and living art at a critical juncture. False taste has great power, 
and has often gained distinction and honour. Life is not long enough to drivel through a 
bad fashion and begin again. The determination to save one’s self and art must be made 
in youth. I feel that is the only hope, at least for myself” (I: 90-91).

The result of this conversation with Millais is the formation of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. 
Thus, Ruskin’s artistic views, but more to the point, his verbal descriptions of Venetian 
paintings, so influence Hunt that he is willing to see art as a crusade—for the souls of men and 
against the established artistic authorities of the day.

It is important, I think, to remember that John Ruskin was also converted, and 
reconverted, through the power of the visual. Robert Hewison details Ruskin’s religious 
background through that author’s own writings:

   Ruskin was trying to explain the progress of his spiritual life through the development of 
   his critical ideas on art. His justification was that the teaching of art was the teaching of 
   all things—which may sound like a glib remark but it was an article of faith, of religious 
   faith, throughout his life. But his belief that art was the expression of God’s will had been 
   founded long before he knew very much about Fra Angelico, indeed about any Italian art. 
   (“Seeing Eye” 32)

This intersection of art and religion is a common thread between Ruskin and Hunt. After a visit 
to Italy in 1845 Ruskin revised his opinion of the true pre-Raphaelites, especially Fra Angelico. 
Though such admiration was potentially dangerous in an England already riled by the thought of
a Catholic resurgence, Ruskin made the second volume of *Modern Painters* “‘an outcry of enthusiastic praise’ for the religious art of Italy” (Hewison 40). In 1858, he visited Venice again, and in a small chapel exchanged “the negative sterility of a Protestant chapel [for] . . . the jewels and colors of Veronese.” Ruskin “had been suffering religious doubts for years, but it took a picture [Solomon and the Queen of Sheba], the argument of the eye, to decide him finally” (Hewison 44). This change in religious beliefs propelled him to an enlarged estimation of art: “building on the system of typological analysis he had learned as a child, and adding to it the wide range of iconographic reference he had acquired as a student of art and literature, he sought to show that art made sense of the world through images and symbols—if one knew how to look” (Hewison 44-45). Though Ruskin’s own religious journey continued throughout his life, it was nonetheless his detailed description of *The Annunciation* by Tintoretto in *Modern Painters* and the responsibilities incumbent on the artist to show true religion that inspired Holman Hunt and, in turn, John Everett Millais and set the initial course of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

Undoubtedly, Ruskin’s belief in “the old article of Jewish faith, that things done delightfully and rightly were always done by the help and in the Spirit of God” (qtd. in Hewison 44) was present also in the philosophy of his friend Holman Hunt.

Once the preacher had been converted, he was ready to preach to others. In 1852 the reviewer David Masson declared that “the Pre-Raphaelites would admit, a painter is great or little, not alone in the virtue of his skill in faithful execution, but in virtue also of the nature of the thoughts of which his pictures are the conveyance” (76). Hunt indeed had high goals and lofty thoughts about the usefulness of his talent. Mary Bennett, author of the catalog for the Walker Art Gallery 1969 exhibition of Hunt’s works, states, “William Holman Hunt’s purpose was to use realism and original imagery to express significant moral ideas” (4). In his web book
Replete with Meaning: William Holman Hunt and Typological Symbolism, Landow adds that “he wanted to revive the capacity of painting to convey important truths of mind and spirit at a time when the existence of these truths was in dispute.” Hunt writes his friend John Lucas Tupper in March of 1855, “In good truth our troubles come upon us like a scourge from God and I have the many abominations of which England has been guilty brought to my mind, and I think more often than ever, if not more effectually, of some means of doing my part towards purifying London of some of the impurities therein” (Coombs 46). In 1872 he bemoans his lack of early artistic training and the fear that such will impede his usefulness to England and the world: “I have got too so many ideas that I might announce <too> for the good of mankind and I cant [sic] because I had when a boy instead of going to school to earn and scrape together small money” (173). In 1874 he returns to this theme: “These people [who would tell him to take a break from painting] would be far from understanding the intensity of this trial to me, how often in one degree or the other, terrible to bear, I have had to struggle with it, and how sacred my resolve would be as one that God had forced upon me” (196). In 1879 Hunt writes, “[N]ot forgetting that all ability and success come from the Lord of Power who can give or withhold it at pleasure” (285). These letters to his intimate friend clearly show Hunt melding the artist’s natural desire for expression and success with the higher purpose of serving God with the talent He has bestowed. The intensity of Hunt’s struggle with the painstaking method of Pre-Raphaelite painting is mirrored in the painstaking effort to make his work count for the eternal good of his countrymen.

For Hunt, character, talent, and calling were inseparable. Christopher Wood declares, “More than either Millais or Rossetti, Hunt represents the serious, moralizing side of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. He was a religious man, and believed that art must be ‘a handmaid in the cause of justice and truth’ . . . . The moralizing, Ruskinian spirit pervades all his work, and he
alone of the Pre-Raphaelites devoted himself to major religious pictures, calculated to appeal to the widest possible audience” (40). He continues, “Hunt’s religious pictures are symbols of Victorian faith” (106). The results of his art come, of course, from the inner qualities of the artist himself: “Hunt’s moral earnestness and his religious faith are key elements in his character” (Wood 109). On December 10, 1854, Hunt writes his friend and fellow Pre-Raphaelite brother Thomas Woolner, “I most often read the Bible here, as the finest and most valuable collection of poems with the greatest local interest and moreover I do so with a deep conviction of its eternal importance which increases every day.” Hunt’s reliance on the Bible for the source of most of his paintings is obvious.

This deep spiritual belief also comes across clearly in his works. He evaluates the beliefs of his age and measures them against those of the Bible which he has come to revere. This reverence results in a conviction that his work must communicate his personal beliefs though he may wish to speculate beyond them. This limiting of his message is clear from his letter of July 1872 concerning his painting The Shadow of Death.

“You know I have a love of the marvelous in me and this has come by the experience I have had in the world which is not often the kind that allows me to pretend that all things can be accounted for by simple common sense. . . . [A]mongst intellectual men there is a fashion in thought. . . . and the rage just now is to acknowledge nothing that cannot be weighed and measured. This may be right but it does not suit my particular mind and I must listen to this and not to another’s. . . . My picture is strictly—as the Temple picture was—historic with not a single fact of any kind in it of a supernatural nature—and in this I contend it is different for [sic] all previous work in religious art. To me it is a living subject because I have painted nothing in it that belongs to a region of fact that I cannot
be sure of. My faith goes far beyond this but so far I have not felt justified in teaching more than I know.”

This letter clearly pits the artist’s personal beliefs against those of the age in which he lived, emphasizing the historic thrust of the painting. While his comments seem to undercut his point about the difference between fact and faith, the allusions to the crucifixion present in the painting make faith an issue, for the historical fact of the crucifixion within the context of the Holy Family portrayed by the work implies the necessary faith in it, as taught by the Church fathers and the Scriptures. In the words of George Landow, “The painting of William Holman Hunt, in contrast, makes explicit, detailed reference to both material and spiritual worlds; for he refused to accept the loss of belief, the cultural fragmentation, and the sheer lack of confidence that made the Victorians the progenitors of the modern age” (William Holman Hunt 1). Hunt may write about the limitation of his faith and its presence in this painting, but he nonetheless demonstrates that his faith is inextricable from his works.

Still in Jerusalem, and still struggling there with the demands of his art, the climate, the difficulties of getting sitters, and his health, Hunt writes to Thomas Combe,

Nothing but trust in God’s highest mercy keeps me in courage and enables me to go on with the long battle. That I keep my health and strength is also an encouragement to me for while this lasts I persuade myself that God may only be trying me and intends me to conquer the difficulty in the end but at the best it seems to me a great misfortune that I undertook this subject as the first of my pictures here [I]f I [had] begun another I might long since have had a picture exhibiting in London and then I might have worked at this without the anxiety I suffer now. To talk of God in ones [sic] daily affairs looks puritanical but indeed living as I do here all alone sometimes for days not seeing a man
with whom I can speak any European language I grow to feel that God is the only being near one the great silent One who stands apart and waits all wise but inscrutable, merciful but with aims so far beyond those we set ourselves and deem the best and greatest that it is difficult to speak of any art or thought without reference to Him. . . . How different is the inner life of an artist intent upon his work to that which outside receive it! . . . A struggle and wrestling with the powers of chaotic darkness and crying in the mire for strength as one fears defeat even while most determined not to yield to cowardice.

This lengthy quotation sums up Hunt’s estimation of his own talents as being God-given and therefore worthy of his greatest effort to use wisely, even if that effort costs the artist worldly success and creature comforts. Hunt clearly indicates his reliance on God for aid in the employment of his talents, portraying his natural human weakness and dependency on God.

Landow notes that just as the great artists of an earlier day derived their theme and methods from Catholicism, so Hunt, a man of his age and faith, has derived his from the religion of his England—from Evangelical Protestantism” (Replete). Several critics consider Hunt’s works in the light of the contemporary religious turmoil of the day (Grieve, Peteri, Maas). While the relevance of Hunt’s individual works to the religious controversy of Tractarianism is certainly critical to the reception that he and other members of the Brotherhood received from the authorities at the Royal Academy and the public at large, discussion of such connection is not the purpose of this paper. It is, however, a crucial point to make that Hunt was aware of such religious turmoil and to know that he had decided opinions on it. He writes in his letters to John Tupper of his concern: “[I] see so many signs that the church—and even Christianity must go to the ground unless some radical changes be made in it” (178). He intensifies his criticism by lamenting that the Church needs “saving . . . from going to the devil headlong with its
confessional and other tomfoolery and worse” (185). This reference is likely to the growth of the High Anglican Church with its ritualistic and accompanying doctrinal likeness to the Catholic Church. Hunt took his responsibility toward his nation very seriously, seeing the artist’s role as one of staunch defender—of its morals, ideals, and standing in the world.

One of Hunt’s methods of accomplishing this rescue is through a common approach of the time: typological symbolism. Landow’s excellent explanation of this approach in Hunt’s art considers individual works as well as the overarching impact of such an approach. In his online article “Hunt’s Themes of Conversion and Illumination Throughout his Career,” Landow notes that “Hunt’s manner, like that of the Evangelical preacher, helps the audience experience this event for themselves.” Having had firsthand experience of the power of the verbal description of a painting through Ruskin’s account of the Tintoretto’s *Annunciation* in *Modern Painters* (volume 2), Hunt uses the same kind of detail in order to accomplish two things: convey the ideas which he desired and create a lasting impression in the viewer’s mind. The Victorian audience was accustomed to typological symbolism. According to Landow, “Typological exegetics appear to have furnished one of the most important subjects of nineteenth-century sermons” based on the written accounts of one of the leading preachers of the time Charles Simeon (*William Holman Hunt* 13). Landow continues, “The result was that the individual worshipper, whether Evangelical or High Anglican, American or English, learned to perceive an excitingly complex network spreading across scriptural events, making the most meaningless seem charged with Christian value and importance” (*William Holman Hunt* 13). Thus Treuherz notes that Hunt made “symbolic realism a cornerstone of his art” (*Victorian Painting* 78). To do so, Hunt drew upon the art that had inspired Ruskin and that had inspired the formation of the Brotherhood: the medieval artists. But Hunt “was determined to breathe new life into Christian iconography to
give it meaning for the modern age” (Treuherz *Victorian Painting* 95). Modernizing the historical symbolism prevalent in the public’s experience with art meant that Hunt left himself open to charges of being abstruse as well as of sending messages that he did not intend. The remedy for such charges was thoughtful consideration by the viewer and the transference of “reading” skills already cultivated by a study of the Scriptures.

Scholars agree that one of the purposes of the vast amount of typological details in Hunt’s paintings is to prompt the viewer to a leisurely examination of the work. Landow states, “In each of his major typological works, Hunt expected the viewer to concentrate upon all the details of the painting, gradually coming to perceive its meaning by what was essentially a process of meditation” (*William Holman Hunt* 16). Sorting out the myriad details and their relationships to each other, to the title, and to the inscribed text meant that the message of the work had time to become lodged in the viewer’s memory. And it was through this memory that the message could then be effective. This kind of meditative atmosphere is not unlike the medieval monk’s poring over illuminated manuscripts with the difference being that the types of text are reversed: Hunt’s viewers pored over the visual, not the verbal. However, that fact does not mean that the verbal had no meaning. It was certainly connected to the visual, but its role became one of explanation rather than persuasion. It focused the viewer’s mind, not necessarily with an eye to action, but certainly to understanding.

As a preacher-artist, Hunt surely understood the burden of the Victorian pastor to educate his congregation, to teach them the doctrines and duties incumbent upon them as members of the household of God. P. T. Forsyth, a contemporary art critic, declares, “Mr. Hunt paints not only religion, but doctrines, as few preachers can preach them” (174). Hunt uses an uninscribed painting to address the serious state of religious instruction in England. His work *The Hireling*
Shepherd clearly challenges the performance of England’s pastors. The painting was exhibited with the quotation of Edgar from King Lear in the catalog: “Sleepeth or waketh thou, jolly shepherd?/Thy sheep be in the corn;/And for one blast of thy minikin mouth,/Thy sheep shall take no harm” (Act III, scene 6). But Hunt’s later explanations make it clear that he had more than the dalliance of a shepherd and a maid in mind. Landow reprints Hunt’s letter to J. E. Pythian:

“Shakespeare’s song represents a Shepherd who is neglecting his real duty of guarding the sheep. . . . He was a type of other muddle headed pastors who instead of performing their services to their flock—which is in constant peril—discuss vain questions of no value to any human soul. . . . [W]hile she feeds her lamb with sour apples his sheep have burst bounds and got into the corn. It is not merely that the wheat will be spoilt, but in eating it the sheep are doomed to destruction from becoming what farmers call ‘blown’” (William Holman Hunt 39).

Timothy Hilton quotes the rest of the letter: “I did not wish to force the moral, and never did till now” (86). He comments on the necessity of Hunt’s explanation; without such help the very plainness of the lad would prohibit any interpretation of a religious nature. He does, however, allow the painting to have “a more general lesson” (86). Barringer notes that the “work also operates at a narrative level, demonstrating the chaos which results from neglecting one’s duty” (10). He goes on to point out that “there was a real danger of the flock being forgotten amid the complexities of religious division” (110) that were present in Victorian England. However, Hunt says, “My first object was to pourtray [sic] a real Shepherd and Shepherdess . . . sheep and . . . fields and trees and sky and clouds instead of the painted dolls with pattern backgrounds called by such names in the pictures of the period [the 1850s]” (Barringer 11). The painting ‘provides
an emblematic image of all men who shirk their duties and thus fail to prepare for ‘the night that cometh’ . . . [It] attacks those negligent clergy who dally with earthly pleasures, permitting their parishioners to perish spiritually” (Landow William Holman Hunt 41). Here Hunt abides by the Pre-Raphaelite goal of truth to nature, painting a real country scene with real country characters, but marries it to the goal of teaching people, especially pastors, about the evils of failed duty and its effect on innocent followers of pastor-teachers.

In this address to the duty of shepherds, men, or pastors—no matter the interpretation, the painting is clearly about failed duty—Hunt accomplishes one of the key elements of explanatory rhetoric: instructing the congregation in the doctrines of Scripture and the resulting duties imposed by them. As we have seen with The Hireling Shepherd, he fulfills this mandate without an inscribed text. But the rhetorical purpose is not always so clear. Landow remarks on the lack of a text with Our English Coasts, a commission prompted by the exhibition of The Hireling Shepherd. This painting is less clearly moralistic and can certainly be considered only a lovely pastoral. But the title change to Strayed Sheep reflects “a deeper meaning” construed by F.G. Stephens: the painting applies to “men, and not of sheep” (Landow William Holman Hunt 43). Hunt presumably approved of this interpretation since Stephens included it in a book he later wrote on his friend’s paintings, a book whose publication Hunt oversaw. However, without an inscription, the message is certainly less clear. Landow speculates, “It seems likely, therefore, that his later practice of appending texts directly to his pictures arose in [sic] the annoying lack of comprehension encountered by Our English Coasts. He had earlier identified the sources of his literary subjects in the Royal Academy catalogues, but the reception of this picture probably played a part in prompting him to append texts to the frame as well” (William Holman Hunt 44). Landow goes on to ascribe the number of other written texts joined with later works to the
public’s continued misunderstanding of the themes (William Holman Hunt 44). Whether this explanation is correct is the topic of this study.

FRAMING

Nevertheless, Hunt’s prevalent use of inscribed texts is an interesting strategy to consider in light of scholarly thinking about the role of framing and the possible purposes of inscriptions. Lynn Roberts notes that “the fashion for artists in the 19th century to design their own frames, making a unified whole of painting and setting, had been fully inaugurated by the Pre-Raphaelites” (“Nineteenth” 273). Her discussion, however, is limited to the consideration of the decorative elements on the frame, not the text itself. In her survey of framing from 1850-1920, Eva Mendgen carries her analysis further, saying, “The frames designed and produced by artists beginning in the 1850s contradicted the critical norms of the period and all previous ‘philosophies of the frame’” (22). The physical construction of the Pre-Raphaelite frames in large part created another plane that surrounded the canvas and provided not only room for an inscription but sometimes seemed to “compete with the surface of the painting and with the wall” (Mendgen 22). She continues, “In other cases, the medium ‘frame’ becomes part of the painter’s argument, and a symbolic commentary supplements or translates that which appears lifelike and concrete in the painting” (22). She accords the use of these inscribed frames (with ornament as well as text) to the influence on the members of the Brotherhood when they toured the Continent and saw early Italian and Flemish works with similar attributes. These were used, Lynn Roberts says, “to expand upon the painted subject” (“Victorian” 59-60). Importantly, the type of frame which Hunt favored—“symbolic or didactic frames”—presents the viewer with “an episode which he is to read as a moral lesson, analogous to the didactic paintings of the 14th and 15th century” (Roberts “Victorian” 60). John Pearson discusses the philosophical elements of
such frames, noting that the use of the frame to continue the meaning of the painting is the
reclaiming of authority by the artist; this “intra-compositional” frame is “the site where struggles
for authority must inevitably be enacted” (19). While Pearson certainly discusses authority in
terms of meaning, it is perhaps not untoward to see the artist as asserting authority as artist, or in
Hunt’s case, as preacher, entitled by position and knowledge to impart instruction to the viewer.

The culmination of this literature survey brings together several crucial threads. One, the
history of explanatory rhetoric is richer than has been discussed. The ancient rhetorical fathers
may have had little to say directly about such rhetoric, but the medieval ones developed its
importance more than has been fully recognized. Second, the visual has been a crucial part of
sermons for many centuries and in many cultures. Today’s emphasis on visual rhetoric in this
electronic age only revisits and expands practices already in place. Third, Holman Hunt felt
himself to be the prophet of the Pre-Raphaelites, a voice crying in the wilderness of
Establishment dogma and cultural morass that the way to return to salvation and nationalistic
health was through the Scriptures and instruction on how those Scriptures affected the
Christian’s beliefs and actions. Duty and Doctrine were the watchwords of Hunt as well as the
Evangelical preachers. Fourth, just as the preacher was urged to construct sermons carefully with
the needs of his audience in mind, using the best approach, so the artist-preacher uses the frame
to instruct his viewers about the message of the work as well as the overarching truth behind it.

That explanatory rhetoric and prevalent use of the visual in sermons were common in the
late Middle Ages is key to the resurgence of their use in the Victorian age, especially among the
Pre-Raphaelite painters. Instructed by their own artist-preacher Ruskin in his efforts to rescue
England and Art from a state of corruption, this reforming Brotherhood championed the very
artists whose works had been the references of those medieval preachers. A natural conclusion is
to see the common thread of medievalism as Eva Peteri has:

In religion as well as in art or literature there was a powerful move from reason to
feelings, from set rules to more individual approaches, a yearning for beauty and sincere
enthusiasm. Parallel to it the values of the religion, art and literature of the Middle Ages
were re-discovered and set as ideal examples to remember and follow. As the ancient
forms of religious worship were brought into practice again by the Tractarians, primitive
works of art became admired and even imitated, medieval ballads revived, and Gothic
castles built. (12)

Hunt, for his part, determined to shoulder the responsibilities of the artist which Ruskin had laid
out in *Modern Painters* (volume two), to undertake the “painter’s vocation [which was] like that
of a priest, whose appointed mission was ‘to express and explain every divine truth which can be
gathered out of God’s revelation’” (Peteri 62). Paint like a priest, preach like a pastor: Hunt’s
application of the medieval visual and rhetorical approaches shows how firmly his duty was
founded in the Middle Ages, how carefully he undertook his responsibilities, and how effectively
the old was made new again, not unlike the work of God he wished to see in his “congregation”
of Victorians. Holman Hunt had been converted through a vivid verbal word-painting by the
sermonizing of the greatest Victorian art critic; in turn, he takes the same vivid visual approach
towards his own audience.
CHAPTER THREE: A CATALOGUE OF FRAMES

On June 23, 1894 I went to Keble College to see “The Light of the World.” It was in a new frame. I cannot trust myself to describe the frame. *William Holman Hunt*

The restrained tone of Hunt’s reaction to the reframing of one of his greatest works cannot mask the anger and despair which he felt at this meddling with his work. For Hunt considered the frame an integral part of the composition, on a par with the canvas itself. His elaborate decoration and design of many of the frames for his works evidences his philosophy that the artwork was a composite whole. In a letter to the *Times*, Hunt sums up his reaction to the travesty of not only reframing his work but also changing the inscription: “In conclusion, to repeat what I said in the end of my letter to the *Sphere* (October 6, 1900) ‘I regard the fate of the (original) “Light of the World” as one of the cruelest misfortunes of my artistic career.’”

Judith Bronkhurst accounts for Hunt’s design practices by noting that Hunt’s father and then he in turn worked for various fabric manufacturers (“Holman Hunt’s Picture Frames” 231). This early experience with designs for fabrics found a natural continuance in his own work of painting and framing. This desire to communicate through all avenues open to the artist reflects what John Pearson calls “experiments by painters . . . [who] used these lintels to control the relation of the art work and the world of the reader” (16). He continues,” By the 1850s, British, French and American artists . . . had begun to reclaim the borders of their paintings as rightfully part of the esthetic property of the composition” (17). In her article “Nineteenth Century English Picture Frames,” Lynn Roberts further identifies the root of this practice: “The fashion for artists in the 19th century to design their own frames, making a unified whole of painting and setting, had been fully inaugurated by the Pre-Raphaelites” (273). And it is this “site where struggles for authority must inevitably be enacted” that accounts for Holman Hunt’s reaction to the desecration of his work (Pearson 19).
To consider paintings and their frames in such a spiritual manner is not as far-fetched as one might think. Hunt himself in writing about the work *The Shadow of Death* and Queen Victoria’s request to see it in her home rather than a gallery states, “No one in England among business people dependant [sic] upon the profession knows how to touch a picture or even the frame of a picture and I am immensely disgusted after I have taken such pains to show what a sacred thing a picture is to find them carrying it about with their profane hands as if it were a tombstone” (May 12, 1860). The insult began, as he perceived it, with the gallery’s allowing the painting to be taken to the palace without Hunt’s permission. Clearly, the authority of the painter is being violated by merely its re-location; an act of re-design as in the case of *The Light of the World* is much more serious.

Based on Hunt’s declaration that a picture is a “sacred thing,” it is not difficult to interpret his frame inscriptions as the rhetorical act of explanation, a facet of rhetoric primarily found in sermons and ecclesiastical settings. Upon examination of these works, I believe that one can say with certitude that Hunt has a clear idea of the doctrine of the gifts of God and a dedication to fulfill his duty of honoring God with those gifts.

**ORGANIZATION**

This chapter is organized according to the subject matter of explanatory rhetoric: exhortations on doctrine and on duty delivered to a Christian audience. These two strong themes are present in most, but not all, of the thirteen inscribed works I have been able to identify; the forthcoming work by Judith Bronkhurst on Hunt’s canon may very well provide further examples. Three of the works—*The Ship, The Awakening Conscience*, and *May Morning*—do not ally themselves strongly with either the category of doctrine or duty. As a result, I have chosen not to discuss them.
Paintings on Doctrine

I have also placed the paintings in what I consider to be a logical order: As I discuss in chapter four, the paintings address the central teaching of the Bible—the person and work of Christ. Just as the practitioners of explanatory rhetoric relied primarily on the words of Scripture, so I have used the biblical teachings as the foundation of what I discuss as the Doctrine of Christ. In an instance of New Testament explanatory rhetoric, the Apostle Peter defines the doctrine:

The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) That word . . . began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did . . . in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly . . . and he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick [living] and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. (Acts 10: 36-43)

This declaration of Christ’s identity and earthly purpose follows Peter’s earlier recognition: “But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, “Blessed art thou . . . for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 16:15-17). St. Paul continues the explanation: “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (I Cor. 14:3-4). These
aspects of Christ—His dual nature as Son of God and Son of Man and His purpose for coming to earth—are those which Hunt’s works preach.

Paintings on Duty

But Hunt’s works also communicate the second of explanatory rhetoric’s aspects: the duties incumbent upon the convert as a result of being taught biblical doctrine. These verses written by the Apostle Paul address the proper order of doctrine and duty, showing that one is the natural result of the other.

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. (Tit. 2:11-14)

The root of the doctrine of salvation—grace—clearly instructs the converted about the duties then incumbent upon them—the way in which they should live. The inextricable relationship between the elements of explanatory rhetoric is present in Hunt’s works as well. For example, I have placed The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple in chapter five on duty, but it instructs the viewer about the nature of Christ as the Son of Man as well. The first painting in chapter five A Converted British Family Sheltering a Christian Priest from the Persecution of the Druids also shows the link between doctrine and duty as cause and effect.

In chapter four Hunt’s works portray the transference of authority from God the Father to God the Son then to the preacher, as ultimately God’s representative on earth, a facet of the doctrine of Christ which leads directly to the duties—to God, family, others—discussed in
chapter five. Since the preacher has the rightful authority for exhorting his congregation to act dutifully, they are to follow not only the example of Christ but also the teachings of His minister. So, ordering the works in these topical ways rather than chronologically as Hunt painted them reveals an overall theme in Hunt’s *oeuvre* that is consistent with the autobiographical accounts of his considering his talent a sacred charge from God.

**DESIGN DETAILS**

The catalog has been designed in a table format with the following information included where known: the title of the work according to the museum holding the piece, a photograph of the work in its frame, the placement and wording of the inscription, a photograph of the inscription itself, the composition date/s, the framemaker’s name, and the current owner.

Unless otherwise noted, the photographs of the paintings were taken during my research trip of October 2004. I have endeavored to sharpen the images as much as possible, but in some cases, the glare on the frame or inscriptions cannot be eliminated. The framemaker has been supplied where possible thanks to the scholarship of Judith Bronkhurst, Jeremy Mass, and Eva Mendgen.

**MECHANICAL DETAILS**

Within the text of chapters four and five, I have used the following mechanical forms.

**Capitalization**

I have chosen to capitalize the following words:

Church: to indicate the generalized group of those who take the Bible as their religious text as distinguished from other religions such as Buddhism and Islam.

Annunciation: to indicate a reference to the visitation of Mary by the angel Gabriel as contrasted with other announcements that occur in the biblical text.
He/Him: to distinguish those references to Christ as deity from the many others to men present in this study.

Art: to indicate the broadest meaning of the term including such modes as sculpture and drawing as well as painting.

Law: to indicate the Mosaic Law, the regulations handed down to the Children of Israel by Moses and governing the Jews.

Spelling

I have chosen the following spellings:

Saviour: in an effort to create less confusion for the reader, I have chosen this British spelling throughout the study since Hunt’s writings and works, the writings of Campbell and Blair, and the biblical texts use it.

Pre-Raphaelitism: other spellings of this term are used in critical works; however, this spelling is the one chosen by William Holman Hunt, so I have used it.
The Scapegoat

Top: Surely he hath borne our Griefs, and carried our Sorrows
Yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of GOD, and afflicted.

Bottom: And the Goat shall bear upon him all their Iniquities unto a Land not inhabited.
Lo, I come, in the volume of the Book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will O God.

Source for image: http://www.thecore.nus.edu/victorian/painting/whh/shadlow/belovplt.html

Framemaker: Frederick C. Buck of Wigmore Street

1898 Collection of Her Majesty the Queen
The Plain of Esdraelon

In these holy fields, over whose acres walked those blessed feet which fourteen hundred years ago were nail’d for our advantage on the bitter cross.

Framemaker: Foord and Dickinson of Wardour Street

1870-75 Ashmolean Museum, Oxford
The Shadow of Death

He made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant . . . And being found in fashion as a man he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross

Framemaker: Foord and Dickinson of Wardour Street

Signed and dated 1870-73, Jerusalem Manchester City Art Gallery
Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with me.

Framemaker: J. Edwin Upcott of 15 Fitzroy Street

Third version painted 1900-1904    St. Paul’s Cathedral, London
A Converted British Family Sheltering A Christian Priest from the Persecution of the Druids

Top: The time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. Their feet are swift to shed blood.

Bottom: For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward. I was a stranger and ye took me in.

Framemaker: Unknown

Signed and dated 1850   Ashmolean Museum, Oxford
Left: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?

Bottom: behold Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me?

Right: wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?

Framemaker: Joseph Green of 14 Charles Street
Signed and dated 1862  Sudley House, Merseyside Collections, Liverpool

Courtesy of the Board of Trustees of National Museums Liverpool [Sudley House]
Claudio and Isabella

Top of frame: Claudio: Death is a fearful thing
Isabella: And shamed life a hateful

Source: www.artyst.net/H/Hunt19/ HuntClaudioetIsabella.htm

Framemaker: Joseph Green of 14 Charles Street

1850 Tate Gallery, London
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<th>Valentine: Now I dare not say I have one friend alive: thou wouldest disprove me Who should be trusted now, when one's right hand I've perjured to the bosom? Proteus, I am sorry I must never trust thee more But count the world a stranger for thy sake.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proteus: My shame and guilt confound me Forgive me Valentine if hearty sorrow Be a sufficient ransom for offence. I tender it here: I do as truly suffer As e'er I did commit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Framemaker: Joseph Green of 14 Charles Street

Signed and dated 1851, Kent  Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery
The Lady of Shalott

Top: From the bank and from the river
He flashed into the crystal mirror
“Tirra lira” by the river
Sang Sir Lancelot

Bottom: Out flew the web and floated wide.
The mirror cracked from side to side.
“The curse is come upon me” cried
The Lady of Shalott.

Frame maker: Unknown

About 1886-1905  Manchester City Art Gallery
The Awakening Conscience

Bottom of frame: As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart.

Image source: Tate Gallery postcard

Frame maker: Joseph Green, of 14 Charles Street

1853 Tate Gallery, London
Bottom of frame: I hear the noise about thy keep,
    I hear the bell struck in the night,
    I see the cabin window bright,
    I see the sailor at the wheel!

May Morning on Magdalen Tower, Oxford

Top scrolls list the title: MAY MORNING  MAGDALEN TOWER

Bottom left: AND FYRY PHEBVS RYSETH VP SO BRIGHTE
Bottom right: THAT AL THE ORIENT LAVGHETH OF THE LIGHTE

Framemaker: C. R. Ashbee’s Guild and School of Handicraft

1888-1893  Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery
CHAPTER FOUR: INSCRIBED DOCTRINE

Painting is the Grandchild of Nature and the Kinswoman of God. (inscribed on Hunt’s palette)

Holman Hunt’s desire to use his art in the service of his God and his country comes across clearly when one considers the content of his inscribed works which nearly all present moral situations calling for Christian action or reflecting biblical teaching. Hunt’s dual role of painter and priest is not a new one. Véronique Plesch’s study of the *ars praedicandi* in paintings of the fifteenth century reveals clearly that there is no fixed demarcation between preaching with words and preaching with visual art. Her study situates the work of the priest and painter Giovanni Canavesio within the rhetorical framework of Alan de Lille’s preaching manuals, guidebooks which advocated among other principles the basic content of preaching and presented the best methods of delivering that content. Plesch defines preaching as having a “two-fold purpose: to teach about faith and about behavior, or, as Alan put it ‘preaching sometimes teaches about holy things, sometimes about conduct’” (174). Again quoting de Lille’s definition of preaching—“an open and public instruction in faith and behavior” (174)—Plesch analyzes the series of murals in a French church. She states, “Canavesio shaped his pictorial idiom—his visual *elocutio*—in order to capture the attention of the viewer, and to involve him or her” (181). Her study also draws on the works of other scholars who have investigated the role of the *tituli*, or “Latin inscriptions that run below each scene and number and describe them” as reflective of the Latin quotations that were inserted in sermons (182). She contends that Canavesio “translated verbal signs into visual ones when he rooted the subject of his depictions in a text” (183) and that the “paintings’ narrative and message are a crystallization of an enduring and multifaceted tradition comprising not only the four Gospels, but also apocrypha, glosses, dramatic adaptations, and other religious texts—a common textual repository from which preachers,
dramatists, and painters alike drew their inspiration and their materials” (183). Within this context of correlation between the verbal source and the visual painting, I believe that Holman Hunt turns to preaching, using inscriptions much as this earlier preacher did. In keeping with the legacy of preaching manuals, Hunt’s works address exactly the same issues: doctrine and duty, the one the impetus and the inspiration for the other.

Hunt follows in another set of footprints, those of fellow artist Hogarth. Though Hogarth was from an earlier period, he and Hunt share certain traits, not the least of which is the moral nature of their works. In fact, John Macmillan makes a strong case for Hogarth’s legacy to include not only inspiration for certain paintings such as the Hireling Shepherd but also the more substantive legacy of the artist’s purpose:

Hunt’s identification with Hogarth . . . reveals his acceptance not just of the modern subject but of the moral subject, and the idea that the nineteenth century learned from Hogarth of the importance of the artist’s commitment to be morally active through his art within the society to which he belongs. The difference between Hunt and Hogarth is that the former sought to be effective not through satire and through irony, but through exhortation and demonstration of what seemed to him the fundamental truths. (195)

For Hunt to act upon that sense of moral responsibility and become a painter-priest of his own century is a logical step and the subject of this study. The five paintings considered in this chapter—The Scapegoat, The Beloved, The Plain of Esdraelon, The Shadow of Death, and The Light of the World—all concern themselves with a key doctrine of Christianity, namely the need for a Saviour that resulted from the Fall of Man in the Garden of Eden and the person of Christ as that Saviour. I will discuss these paintings in the above order, as I believe that in doing so, there is a logical unfolding of the doctrine that results.
THE SCAPEGOAT

The Rhetorical Situation

The aims of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood to be true to Nature are not at odds with this pastoral endeavor. “The artist fulfils his moral role by painting the visual truth” (Macmillan 196). And in no painting other than The Scapegoat, does Hunt’s meshing of these two goals come across as clearly. Hunt’s efforts to represent the truth of the doctrine of Christ led him to the Holy Land where he began other works such as The Shadow of Death and The Plain of Esdraelon. But the extraordinary lengths to which he went while painting The Scapegoat set it apart from the rest. The political unrest of the region at the time made his physical presence there dangerous; the difficulty of obtaining guides who understood his goals made his work more demanding; and the procurement of a white goat was an ordeal in itself. In addition he “visited the Dead Sea around the time of the Day of Atonement so as to capture the quality of light at the very time of year that the goat was released from the Temple” (Sussman 87). But his dedication to the principles of the PRB was enough for Hunt to overcome the impediments of the process.

Within the historical context of the Brotherhood, The Scapegoat is remarkable for several reasons. According to Christopher Wood, Hunt “became the first artist to apply Pre-Raphaelite principles to the landscape of the Holy Land” (82). In addition, according to Eva Peteri, “[N]ever before Hunt was this type used or symbol shown in visual presentation” (75). The portrayal of the scapegoat was not a new type, or symbol of the sacrifice of Christ as Saviour; what was new was Hunt’s visually portraying that type.

The Inscription

The painting has two inscriptions: the top from Isaiah 53:4 “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted.”
The bottom verse is a portion from Leviticus 16:22: “And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.”

The Doctrine: Humanity’s Sin and Need for Christ as Saviour

The Scapegoat is a striking work. Whether one loves it (and there are few who do) or hates it, this work is startling and significant. It bears within its frame the dedication of the artist to capture on canvas the arid, forsaken land of the Dead Sea and the hopeless plight of a goat that has far deeper meaning than can be communicated through mere verisimilitude. The appearance of the goat, trapped in the mire of the salt flats, surrounded by skeletons of other hapless creatures, and dazed by the experience of being abandoned in the wilderness, is no less important than the atmosphere. The dry, barren landscape with marshy, crusted borders, unworldly lighting, and the menacing circle of mountains conveys the emotion of complete despair.

And it is exactly that desolate atmosphere that Hunt needs to communicate to his visual congregation. For “[t]eaching about sins prepares one for confession” (Plesch 176, 178), and according to the Bible, it is the sins of the Israelites that have sent the scapegoat to his doom. The core doctrine of the Bible is the redemption of humanity. The Bible teaches that sin must be punished by separation from God. And the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden resulted first in separation from God’s fellowship and then from the Garden itself. But God was unwilling for His creation to remain in such a state, so He provided a way to redeem humanity: the death of His Son Jesus in their place. As Christians view the Old Testament, that death was prefigured by the animal sacrifices and the rituals of the Tabernacle and the Temple.

Hunt draws from two sources, much like the medieval priest’s “common textual repository” (Plesch 183), to communicate the first key concept in the doctrine of redemption. The Bible records in Leviticus the redemptive performance of the scapegoat:
And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgression in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness. (16: 21-22)

The bottom inscription comes clearly from this last verse. Hunt drew also from the Talmud for the red threads tied around the horns of the goat. In researching the ceremony, he discovered the Talmudic teaching that if the sacrifice of the goat were accepted, then the red threads would be turned to white as evidence of the forgiveness of God. He also draws from another part of Scripture, Isaiah 53, for the top inscription on the frame. It is in this conjunction of Old Testament scriptures that the Christian doctrine of redemption finds its roots. As a type, the goat without its fulfilling sacrifice in the New Testament—the death of Christ—would have been nothing more than the pitiable victim of a wilderness. So to communicate the biblical doctrine of Christ, Hunt connects the terrible price of sin, both for the goat and for the Saviour, with the remedy for that sin.

The book of Isaiah prophesies of the suffering of Christ, recording the physical agonies of crucifixion and the spiritual blindness of the Jews. In The Scapegoat, Hunt’s red threads serve to crown the goat much as the thorns bloodied the head of Christ. Christ’s death, the blending of sin and salvation, was as unlovely to look at as the goat in Hunt’s picture. The inscription records that according to the doctrine of Christ, the Jews (the “we” of Isaiah 53) would see Christ as one who bore the punishment of God—the miseries of affliction—without recognizing that it was their own “griefs and sorrows” He was taking upon Himself. So in the conjoining of Leviticus and Isaiah, the goat and the crown of red, Hunt manages to bridge the Old and New Testaments,
just as the Bible teaches that Christ bridged Old Testament Law and New Testament Grace. Hunt’s Dead Sea setting is an effective venue for communicating the doctrine of man’s sinfulness. The goat’s sacrifice without the faith of the Israelites would have been incomplete. In the same way Christians believe the Old Testament to be incomplete without the New Testament which fulfills it. The horror that Hunt’s Christian Victorian audience shared at the sight of the painting is empty without the recognition of the biblical teaching behind the horror: that one’s sins can be forgiven through faith in Christ and His death on the cross. And, as Peteri declares, “Hunt’s exhausted, starving goat has neither dignity, nor sentiment; it generates neither elevated feelings, nor sweet smiles; it is basically repulsive and unpleasant to look at. This is, of course, a great achievement, since that is exactly the moral ‘duty’ of the picture: to rouse the benign spectator by showing him how an innocent creature must suffer for his own iniquities” (76). Peteri corroborates my focus on Hunt as painter and priest and on his ability to sermonize through his paintings. Hunt has assumed just such a “moral ‘duty’.” In spite of Timothy Hilton’s judgment that “[n]o other interpretation of his [Hunt’s] behaviour can ever explain the touch of the madman in such a totally uncompromising image as *The Scapegoat*” (108), Hunt’s behavior accords precisely with the duty of the pastor to teach the doctrines of the Church which find their root in the sinfulness of humanity.

*The Scapegoat* itself is stark and bleak, but as Bronkhurst notes, the catalog of symbols—“cross of circles,” “seven star motif,” “dove holding an olive branch,” and “Menorah” (“William Holman Hunt’s” 234)—on the frame combine with the inscription and the canvas to communicate these threads of thoughts: the “four simply stated motifs representing the Old Church and Christ as the Redeemer” (Bennett “Footnotes” 57) which show “Christian forgiveness overlaying the Jewish scheme of atonement” (Bennett *Artists* 72). As Judith
Bronkhurst notes, “These symbols of hope . . . are intended to convey that the sufferings of the scapegoat/Saviour have a redemptive as well as a tragic aspect” (“Holman Hunt’s” 234). It is this basic tenet of Christianity that Hunt intends to place squarely before his audience, as Barringer notes, “The painting of Christ was the central endeavour of Hunt’s career” (128).

Hunt’s effort to preach Christ was costly, both in the expenses associated with foreign travel to the Middle East and in his reputation as an artist. Even Ruskin, the champion of the Brotherhood and often of Hunt himself, sharply criticized both the topic and technique. His Academy Notes of 1856 consider the work noteworthy as “food for thought” but for little else. Ruskin praises Hunt’s subject matter, his efforts to travel to foreign lands for accurate settings, and even his intentions in painting such a work. But Ruskin condemns the quality of the technique, stating, “It is not good painting; and much as I esteem feeling and thought in all works of art, still I repeat, again and again a painter’s business is first to paint . . . . Though I acknowledge the good purpose of this picture, yet, inasmuch as there is no good hair painting, nor hoof painting in it, I hold it to be good only as an omen, not as an achievement” (74). Hunt himself intimates in a letter to his friend and patron John Tupper that the reception of The Scapegoat kept him from being elected a member of the Royal Academy (Coombs et al. 134).

Despite the cost, Hunt, with the “integrity of the fundamentalist” (Barringer 132), was not deterred; for he was “a literalist who viewed art as a didactic instrument for furthering moral and religious values” (Fredeman 133). The teaching of the doctrine of man’s sin and the need for redemption is the lynchpin of the Christian Church. There is no call to duty, according to Christian thinking, until the relationship between humanity and his God has been repaired; and that repair demands a thoroughly accurate understanding of sin. Even the placement of the goat, centered in the forefront of the composition, forces the viewer to confront what were for Hunt
the dreadful consequences of sin, those consequences for which Christians believe Christ substituted Himself in the sinner’s place. The devastating connotations of the words in Hunt’s inscriptions—griefs, sorrows, stricken, smitten, afflicted—are mirrored in the mire of the goat’s situation. The wilderness of the goat’s wanderings is a fitting picture of what the Bible teaches about the soul’s separation from God without the benefit of Christ’s death. The “land not inhabited” is where the biblical doctrine of the sinfulness of humanity places both the sinner and the Saviour. With *The Scapegoat* Hunt has shown the viewer that place.

**THE BELOVED**

The Rhetorical Situation

The next painting that follows in the sequence of doctrinal teaching which I perceive to be among Hunt’s inscribed works is *The Beloved*. Although rarely discussed, the painting is of great importance, for it makes evident the connection between Christ and God’s plan of salvation as presented in the Scriptures. Hunt found himself in a different rhetorical situation with this work than with *The Scapegoat*. It was commissioned by Queen Victoria as a copy of the head of Christ from *The Shadow of Death* and is still part of the collection of the royal family. Hunt has painted a bust of Christ who is looking upward with an ecstatic expression, holding in his hand a scroll with a landscape barely visible in the background.

One of the factors in the rhetorical situation Hunt faces is the knowledge which he expected his audience to have in deciphering his work. In many of his works, he expects the audience to do some mental detective work, which he assumes they have the ability to do, the work of deciphering the clues he links together. The Victorian cultural milieu enabled him to layer meanings and associations using symbols, colors, emblems, and inscriptions. “Countless sermons, tracts, and hymns taught Victorian worshippers of all sects to read the Bible in search
of types” (Landow William Holman Hunt 7). According to Landow, as a result of this education came several “habits of mind” which Hunt drew upon:

First, scripture readers learned to delight in complex unravelings of biblical history. Next they learned to cultivate a love of paradox and enigma. . . . Third, worshippers became indoctrinated with the notion that every fact, every event, bears some meaning if we can only penetrate to it. . . . Fourth, the student of scripture perceived that all things existed simultaneously in two realms, the physical and the spiritual. (William Holman Hunt 13-14)

This abundance of communicative details is present throughout Hunt’s career, especially in The Light of the World, a work painted earlier than The Beloved and his most famous which I will discuss later. And while he expected his audience to be capable of such decoding work, it was nevertheless true that they often needed help. The most prominent help came through John Ruskin’s letters to The Times explaining such works as The Awakening Conscience and The Light of the World in much detail, acting as a kind of sermonic interpreter. Hunt’s own writings are full of this kind of typological reading; most notably for Hunt is Ruskin’s discussion of the typological symbolism present in Tintoretto’s The Annunciation. Hunt muses, “I thought what happiness Tintoretto must have felt when he had this illuminating thought presented to him, and of his joy in carrying it out on canvas, and was wondering how few were the men who had pondered over the picture to read it thoroughly, until in fulness of time the decipherer came and made it clear” (II: 261). One can assume that Hunt himself felt the same gratification when Ruskin “read” his works for the public.
The Inscription

The inscription on The Beloved is a portion of Psalm 40: 7-8 “Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.” Hunt uses an excerpt of this passage, replacing the speaker’s self-reference with the figure in the painting and referring to the law by the pictured scroll.

The Doctrine: Christ, the Beloved Son of God

In keeping with Campbell’s definition of the lecture type of explanatory rhetoric which sets out “to explain the train of reasoning contained, or the series of events related, in a certain portion of the sacred text, and to make suitable observations from it, in regard either to the doctrines, or to the duties of our religion” (232), using the inscription, Hunt asks the viewer to connect several biblical references, weaving the threads of Scripture into a comprehensive presentation of the doctrine of Christ. This painting is clearly exposition and as such teaches “the people to read the scriptures with understanding” (Campbell 29). The “I” in the inscription undoubtedly refers to Christ, the only figure in the painting, and Hunt’s audience would have associated the scroll with the Bible. So the inscription is clearly a prophetic one, since its presence in the book of Psalms obviously could not have been written about Christ as a contemporary of David, the psalmist, some one thousand years separating them. However, because David’s words are often interpreted as Messianic prophecies, Hunt’s juxtaposition of the figure of Christ with David’s words builds on that relationship and emphasizes Christ as the New Testament fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy. In this respect, Hunt extends the correlation he began with The Scapegoat. There, the animal sacrifice is linked to a prophecy of the Jewish Messiah whose identity is not revealed. However, in The Beloved, Hunt proposes that sacrifice to be Christ.
A Bible concordance reveals that David’s words are repeated nearly verbatim in the New Testament book of Hebrews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psalm 40: 7-8</th>
<th>Hebrew 10: 7</th>
<th>Hebrews 10:9-10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.</td>
<td>Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.</td>
<td>Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These important variations in the quotation are one thread which in conjunction with the image of Christ holding the Word of God and the title itself communicates the meaning of the work as a whole. Understanding them is crucial to an understanding of the message of the whole. Bible scholars believe that the historical David of the Psalms functions as both poet-king of his people and as prophet of the future Messiah. In the quotation from Psalm 40, David as king of Israel refers to God as “my God.” While Christ the Messiah did not share the same relationship with God as David the man did, David’s reference to “my God” is echoed in Christ’s recorded cry from the cross: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46). The reappearance of David’s prophecy in the book of Hebrews and its extended treatment clearly places the prophecy and Christ’s sacrificial death in conjunction with one another, textually reinforcing that the one is the fulfillment of the other. Thus, Hunt conflates the two verses in order to make clear that he believes David’s prophecy is indeed of Christ and to declare that the nature of Christ’s sacrifice was entirely voluntary, a key principle in his painted sermon.

George Landow is the primary critic of Hunt’s The Beloved, and he does a thorough job of placing the work within the context of prophecy, noting that David “was conventionally taken by Victorian and earlier exegetes as a type of Christ” (“Shadows” 479). Landow makes an
interesting rhetorical analysis: the work “provide[s] a paradigmatic moment, one in which Christ as human encounters Christ the divine: The historical Jesus confronts himself as Messiah and the Beloved—the divine text confronts its source and origin” (“Shadows” 479). Here a second thread is added to David’s prophetic words—that of the “text” or Word. There are, of course, several passages of Scripture that identify Christ as the Word of God, especially John 1, and Hunt’s portrayal of Christ with the scroll (representing the Law) reflects this imagery. But though Landow does an excellent job with the context of Christ and prophecy, he admits difficulty with the title, the third thread, sourcing it in the Song of Solomon where a courtship takes place between the Beloved and a Shulamite woman. Landow admits that the fit is not a perfect one, but suggests no other possibility (“Shadows” 479). I propose that a New Testament source of the title is more likely especially since it has a direct impact on the biblical doctrine of Christ about which Hunt is instructing his viewers.

The Church’s teaching about the doctrine of Christ rests upon an accurate understanding of who the Church thinks He is. And it is exactly that truth that Hunt portrays in this work. Landow assumes that Christ’s stance indicates the action of prayer, a plausible interpretation. However, the title The Beloved resonates most clearly in the recorded life of Christ at His baptism in the wilderness by his cousin John the Baptist, which initiates His ministry as the Son of God. Three of the four Gospel writers—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—record minor variations of this event: “And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11). I would argue that this reference is the source of Hunt’s title and the starting place for his teaching. Hunt no doubt was familiar with Church teaching which postulates that unless one accepts the relationship between God and Christ, there is no reason to follow Christ’s teaching, for it is His position as the Son of God that gives Him the authority to
teach and to command obedience. The recognition of His Son by God the Father in such a public way places His stamp of approval upon the activities of Christ. This announcement in the biblical record inaugurates His ministry and ultimately makes His sacrifice acceptable. Supporting this interpretation, Hunt paints Christ with face lifted upward, not in prayer, but in attention to the voice of His Father, which reassures Him of their relationship and the rightness of His coming to earth. That affirmation is crucial for both Christ and Christianity since Christ’s mission was to bear the sins of the world and suffer the accompanying separation from His Father. So here at the start of His ministry, which would end in crucifixion, Christ hears His Father’s approbation and encouragement to continue doing the “will” of God which the inscription indicates.

The Bible records this performative approval another time in Christ’s ministry and further establishes His claims to authority. About midway through His ministry, Christ takes three of His disciples, Peter, James, and John, up on the Mount of Transfiguration. There He assumes his form as the Son of God, a glorious image of heavenly beauty and power. Moses and Elijah appear with Christ, and Peter is so overcome with the experience that he proposes three altars, one for each person. Peter’s lack of understanding and recognition of the divine identity of Christ, instead putting Him on a par with the Old Testaments figures, results in God the Father’s reaffirmation of Christ’s position and authority. Again, Matthew, Mark, and Luke record essentially the same event: “And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him” (Mark 9:7). But here, unlike at Christ’s baptism, the Bible records that God the Father adds a command to His claiming of Christ as His Son. The additional admonition to “hear” Christ validates Him as an emissary of God, as God’s presence in their midst. As reflected in the biblical narrative, Christ’s disciples
should already have understood who Christ was and what that identity meant, but obviously from Peter’s mistake, the lesson had not yet been learned.

Incorporating the text, the image, and the title allows Hunt to present a clear picture of what Christians believe Christ and His mission on earth to be. The inscription indicates that His presence is a fulfillment of a prophecy recorded “in the volume of the book.” Christ Himself refers to the same fulfillment in an incident recorded by Luke, another Gospel writer. In Nazareth, his hometown, Christ assumes His prophesied position as Saviour sent by God:

[A]s his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened upon him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. (4:16-21)

This verbatim quotation of Isaiah 61:1-2 stops before “and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn.” This omission is significant to the Christian teaching that Christ’s mission was “to save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21); He had not come to fulfill the prophecy of vengeance found in the remaining part of Isaiah’s text. God’s vengeance would not fall until all had had a chance to avoid it by accepting His Son’s sacrificial death in their place.

The barely discernible landscape behind the figure of Christ offers its own arena for speculation about connections between the meanings of his works. *The Plain of Esdraelon* (1870)
was begun as a study for the background of *The Shadow of Death* (1870-3), (paintings which will be discussed later) which in turn prompted *The Beloved* (1898) at the request of the Queen. Each painting in turn depends less and less upon the background reinforcing the notion that Hunt’s focus on Christ developed throughout his career. But it is also worth wondering whether Hunt portrays the relationship between Christ and this world as it developed over time. It seems to me that by the time Hunt begins *The Beloved*, he had addressed the historical geographical frame of Christ’s earthly existence with *The Plain of Esdraelon*, then kept that factual background as a foundation for his discussion of Christ as the Son of Man in *The Shadow of Death*. In *The Beloved*, a work that focuses on the divine nature of Christ, Hunt gives the viewer little identifiable landscape, emphasizing the eternal rather than temporal nature of Christ as the Son of God. This vague treatment of the landscape also enables Hunt to allow the chain of verse associations begun by the inscription to encompass Christ’s baptism, the Mount of Transfiguration, and the synagogue at Nazareth. Broadening the viewer’s associations is facilitated by this generic landscape. Thus, not only the filling of the canvas by the figure of Christ but also the accompanying lack of background persuades the viewer to consider the text and sermon Hunt preaches about Christ as the Son of God.

This chain of biblical references set into motion by Hunt’s use of the Davidic text elucidates several key tenets of the Christian doctrine of Christ. One, Christ’s authority for teaching and preaching came from God the Father who sent His beloved Son to earth to reconcile humanity with Himself through Christ’s sacrificial death. Two, Christ’s coming had been a “delight,” not a burden. The sufferings He would endure on the cross were done with the full knowledge of the “joy that was set before Him,” (Heb. 12:2) the joy of restoring fellowship between God and humanity. Three, the presence of Christ on the earth was a matter of prophecy
fulfilled, foretold by David and Isaiah and confirmed by the disciples and the New Testament writer of Hebrews. Fourth, Christ had come “not to destroy the law, or the prophets . . . but to fulfill” (Matt. 5:17) the Mosaic Law. This Law had imposed the sacrifices, such as the scapegoat, that depended for efficacy on the faith of the Jews in the future death of the Messiah for their sins. The context of the Hebrews quotation clearly connects Christ with this Old Testament sacrificial scheme, as the ultimate and final sacrifice needed for the abolishing of sin’s penalty.

Hunt began the treatment of the doctrines of Christianity with the scapegoat, the tangible symbol of humanity’s sin and the earthly type of its remedy. In *The Beloved*, he portrays the fulfillment of that type in Christ and establishes it through David’s prophecy of one of his own lineage whose sole purpose was to “do thy will O God,” a will which Christ later identified by saying: “This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:40). In *The Beloved*, Hunt presents Christ as both the beloved Son and the world’s Saviour, the next link in the chain of doctrine that he develops through his inscribed texts and upon which depends the instruction of duty which he takes up as well in his role as preacher-artist.

THE PLAIN OF ESDRAELON

The Rhetorical Situation

Hunt’s landscape *The Plain of Esdraelon from the Heights above Nazareth* is the fruit of his third visit to the Holy Land (1875-78) though its initial sketches began in 1870. The painting portrays a wide vista in the background with shepherds and flocks in the foreground. The composition of the piece is such that the viewer is made to feel a part of the landscape by being made to feel a part of the group of shepherds in the foreground. The painting served as the
preliminary work for the background of *The Shadow of Death* and fit the pattern of most of his watercolor landscapes. As Staley explains:

The people or animals are only appendages to the landscapes. The works give the feeling that Hunt felt he had to include figures to enliven the compositions, but then he ruthlessly shoved them aside so they would be in the way as little as possible. But he seems also to have wanted to suggest by the way he cut off the compositions or activities that the space of the picture is only an arbitrary slice of a larger whole. (91)

This tension between figures and landscape demonstrates the tension between Hunt’s adherence to Pre-Raphaelite truth-to-nature principles and his recognition of the continuing history of the geographical place. Hunt’s version of the “slice-of-life” vignette attempts to show a historical timeline as well as a compelling moment in time. For Hunt the preacher, that moment melds the past and the present, the time of Christ and the time of the Christian. The historical not only impinges on the present, it is the reason for its being. In the context of the inscription, not only the landscape of the present is accounted for by the past, but the emotions of the present are as well. In other words, in Hunt’s painting the bitterness of the past sufferings of Christ accounts for the joy of the present.

Hunt’s attention to detail is apparent in the frame design as well as in the painting’s composition. According to Lynn Roberts,

This frame . . . was conceived and executed with as much care and technical perfection as the painting itself. According to Hunt, the frame was to be a kind of ‘dark zone’ that helped the viewer concentrate on the picture before him. . . . The frame-makers had difficulty carrying out Hunt’s designs in time for the work’s exhibition at the Grosvenor Gallery in London. It was on this occasion Hunt wrote: ‘it is painful to think of a highly
finished and compressedly composed picture being seen only in a temporary frame’.

(“Victorian” 66)

Hunt’s obvious intentionality in the framing of his works and his distress at the workmen’s inability to finish the frame in time for the exhibition reflect his intense drive to fulfill both the tenets of the Pre-Raphaelite movement and Ruskin’s declarations regarding the duties of an artist.

The Inscription

The inscription on the frame is an interesting choice: it comes from Shakespeare’s Henry IV Part 1. The play opens with the major characters planning their expedition to the Holy Land to “chase these pagans in those holy fields Over whose acres walk’d those blessed feet Which fourteen hundred year ago were nail’d For our advantage on the bitter cross” (I.i.24-27). Hunt has obviously painted a more kindly picture of the inhabitants of Palestine, the jolly shepherds being a far cry from the “pagans” of Shakespeare’s play. But the high regard for the homeland of Christ is a continuing theme.

While it may seem strange to consider a work inscribed with lines from Shakespeare on a par with those inscribed with the words of Scripture, it is important to note the regard with which the Victorians viewed the Bard. Linda Rozmovits has conducted an extensive study of the popularity of Shakespeare for the Victorians and contends that “by 1869 assertions of Shakespeare’s unique status had not only acquired a fiercely moral inflection . . . but, indeed, had come to inhabit forms of discussion, celebration, and worship which belonged not to any mortal man however accomplished but to God alone” (12). This elevation of Shakespeare to the heights of veritable worship was actually enfolded into the religious framework of the day. The church calendar came to recognize a “Shakespeare Sunday” when the clergy expounded on the merits of
the Bard, some more willingly than others. The association of these “formal conventions of
Christian worship” (Rozmovits 13) with Shakespeare came to be in large part because of the
impact of the German higher criticism which, among other effects, brought about the demotion
of the Bible from being considered divinely inspired to being thought of as only a work of
literature, an approach that is taught in many secular universities today. Although the methods of
this melding of Shakespeare and the Bible were varied, “the effect of all this scholarship and
speculation was clearly to reinforce, in both the popular and the scholarly mind, the belief that
the Bible and the works of Shakespeare were somehow inextricably linked” (Rozmovits 25). It is
no wonder then that Hunt, whether or not he ascribed to these beliefs, felt free to use
Shakespeare’s reference to the land of Christ in The Plain of Esdraelon in the manner that he
used scriptural references. Most viewers would have felt no compunction about this union either.
Hunt’s work shows one way in which Shakespeare could be used with the authority of Scripture,
especially in the context of Hunt’s painted sermons.

The Doctrine: Christ as a Historical Figure of Palestine

Although some who read the painting, like Staley, see the figures in the foreground as
only an excuse for a landscape, the inscription adds a further dimension to their presence. The
quotation from Shakespeare makes explicit the relationship Hunt hinted at in the previous work,
The Beloved. In The Plain of Esdraelon, Christ is directly associated with the cruel, agonizing,
“bitter” cross of sacrifice. The contrast between the happy shepherds of the painting and the
somber reminder of Christ’s death in the inscription only heightens the value of the land of
Israel. In an era when there were international tensions aroused by that very landscape, and
during a time when Hunt himself risked his well-being to visit the Holy Land and paint its
scenery, the inscription reminds the viewer of two things: the landscape of Palestine is imbued
with historical value and with spiritual significance. The landscape of the Holy Land in 1877 and the occupations of the people were relatively unchanged from biblical times, making the historical presence of Christ there more easily recognized and valued. In an age as well of growing religious skepticism, Hunt’s painting and its inscription establishes not only the physical surroundings for the Son of Man but also the mission He undertook as the Son of God. This painting extends the chain of doctrine that began with another landscape, that of The Scapegoat and the Dead Sea. Now Hunt paints a living, vibrant scene that Christians believe can occur only because of the paradox of Christ’s death: out of death come both eternal life and the joy of living. The “bitter cross” brings forth life, much as the bitter waters of Marah became sweet for the wandering Israelites when Moses cast a tree into them (Exod. 15:23-25).

Hunt’s borrowing of Shakespeare is in keeping with Evangelical pastors of the time who drew from various sources for the illustrations to their sermons. For the Victorian, the ability to link sources such as Shakespeare with biblical truths was a commonplace. Indeed the regard which Shakespeare’s Henry IV had for the Holy Land and his endeavor to rescue it from “the infidel” are much the same as Hunt’s: the landscape of Palestine must be rescued from mere geographic beauty and have its spiritual truth brought home to the viewer. Hunt, the true-to-nature Pre-Raphaelite, cannot paint mere rock and sand; as a faithful painter-priest his ideal of bettering his audience and his country through his art compels him to place the land of Palestine into, what he believes, is its rightful perspective, just as Shakespeare’s king did in his day, turning the attention of ruler and people alike from their own civil disputes and wars to the higher calling of the doctrine of Christ, whose death, the Bible teaches, makes death powerless and whose life makes all scenes come alive.
THE SHADOW OF DEATH

The Rhetorical Situation

Hunt began the *The Shadow of Death* during his second trip to the Holy Land (1869-1872). Beginning first in Bethlehem in an actual carpenter’s shop, he then worked on it on the rooftop of his rented house in order to get the shadow perfectly, and finally finished it in 1873. Exhibited in London, this work and *The Triumph of the Innocents* “consolidated his reputation as England’s greatest religious artist” (Wood 106). Hunt records the reaction to his work:

As in Jerusalem, the extreme Church party denounced it as blasphemous, altogether refusing to acknowledge that the record in St. Mark should be read as authority for representing Jesus Christ as Himself a carpenter. . . . When it was shown in the North it was hailed by artisans and other working men as a representation which excited their deepest interest, so that they came to the agent . . . [requesting installment plans for purchasing prints] that the idea might always be before them in their own homes. This was exactly what I most desired, the dutiful humility of Christ’s life thus carrying its deepest lessons. (II: 310)

Hunt had three working titles for the piece: “The Weary Christ,” “The Carpenter,” and “Christ the Carpenter” (Coombs et al. 108). These titles all emphasize the occupation of Christ, a point that Hunt obviously deemed important. He explains the theme himself in a letter to John Tupper in July 1870 from Jerusalem:

The subject may or may not be what they call a mystical one[.] to me the object is not to preach with it any particular sermon[.] it is an incident of a typical kind as all subjects should be in the sense that they may be applied to general questions[.] Jesus Christ was a King as all intellectual or moral teachers are in their own degrees for other generations
and his Mother in this incident is a very high human example of the world who think that royalty consists in the wielding of temporal power. I say this by no means to confine Christ’s claim. I accept it as he declares it in the most unbounded sense, more frankly now than I ever did for late examination of the question has removed all shadow of doubt about his spiritual authority and so I would wish /the picture/ to contain the higher idea. My hope is to lead people to realise the fact as a means of familiarizing them with the character and position he took in the world and so to understand him better in all ways’” (Coombs et al.129).

Two things are significant about this letter: one, Hunt has himself apparently been wrestling with spiritual matters and as a result his work conveys his conclusions to the audience. No preacher is ever able to preach successfully or convincingly of that which he is not certain himself. Second, Hunt declares that his goal is to educate the viewing audience about the person of Christ, a clear statement of the purpose of explanatory rhetoric: the instruction in doctrine and duty. This painting then belongs in the category of Hunt’s doctrine paintings.

Again, there is a relationship between this work and The Beloved. Obviously, the works are very alike since this work was the model for The Beloved. In both works Christ is portrayed with much the same expression though because of the canvas size, Hunt had to reposition the arms in The Beloved. Both works share the scroll as a key element; in The Beloved, Christ is holding it; in The Shadow of Death it is on the windowsill. Clearly, in both works Hunt relates the presence of Christ to the Bible as a fulfillment of what was foretold, both about His divine nature and His earthly work. Considered in the doctrinal timeline that I am proposing, the divine nature of Christ is the eternal one; the earthly body He inhabited comes second. The one motivates the other. Christians believe that without a divine nature, any sacrifice Christ made for
sin would be ineffectual; in essence He would be paying for His own sin and therefore be unable to take on the punishment for others.

The paintings function as companion pieces in another way: both reflect the families of which Christ was a part. In *The Beloved* God the Father gives public testimony to His Son’s mission. In this work, Mary is confronted with the ultimate pain of a mother; she is made aware of the circumstances of her beloved son’s eventual death. As a family portrait, *The Shadow of Death* is full of poignancy, for the Bible records that when the shepherds came to the stable at Christ’s birth, they relayed the sayings of the angels. “And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart” (Luke 2:19). One can imagine that in addition to the shepherd’s words, Mary ruminates upon the Annunciation and the tidings of the angel Gabriel, foretelling Christ’s eventual ruling and unending kingdom (Luke 2:28-33). In *The Shadow of Death* Hunt shows her with more to consider: the gifts of the Magi which many biblical scholars believe were given when Christ was a toddler and which would have reinforced the idea of Christ as a king. So Mary has many things to ponder both before and after Christ’s birth.

In *The Shadow of Death* Hunt gives Mary a new notion to muse on, this time a drastic contrast to the others. Here is the foretelling, not of Christ’s ruling, but of His death. And just as Gabriel explains the miraculous conception of Christ as an “overshadow[ing]” by the “power of the Highest” (Luke 1:35), so Mary is overshadowed again, this time by the event which is also foretold to her by the old man in the Temple: “And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother . . . Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also” (Luke 2:34-35). For Mary as well as for Christ there is an obedience unto death: Mary’s choice came at the Annunciation when she told the angel, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word”
(Luke 1:38). Hunt throws into sharp relief the contrast between Mary’s expectations for Christ and the reality of His earthly mission. But just as Christ was “found in fashion as a man,” according to Hunt’s inscription, the Son of God as well as Son of Man, so the crucifixion was only the shadow of death; the Bible teaches clearly that after His crucifixion Christ arose and Mary had her Son restored to her for at least a short time before He ascended into heaven. In short, the layering of meanings made by title, imagery, inscription, and paint is comparable to the text of a sermon being preached by the minister and meditated upon by the congregation, each finding rich exposition and food for their own ponderings.

The Inscription

The inscription is a portion of Philippians 2:7: “But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Hunt has omitted the middle section “and was made in the likeness of men” possibly because of the repetition with the next phrase, “And being found in fashion as a man.”

The Doctrine: Christ, the Son of Man

So what then does The Shadow of Death contribute to the doctrine of Christ that Hunt’s works have been developing? George Landow presents a thorough and enlightening reading of the work from the perspective of Hunt’s use of typological symbolism. He explains that the “symbolic potential of the type to place the spectator in the presence of two events, the prefiguring and its fulfilment, offered him [Hunt] a way of recasting the ancient subjects. . . . The Shadow of Death, which functions in terms of types within the Saviour’s life, is also a foreshadowing of these events [“the Passion and Crucifixion of Christ”] (William Holman Hunt 101-02). He asserts that this work “is one of his most successful fusions of realism and religious
symbolism” (William Holman Hunt 116). Hunt himself made the point in the pamphlet accompanying the painting’s exhibition that “to this day there is no picture representing Christ in full manhood enduring the burden of common toil . . . Mr. Hunt aims to show Him, as He may have been seen by His brethren, while still gaining His bread by the sweat of His face, during His first but longest humiliation” (qtd. in Landow William Holman Hunt 117). Landow continues, “Since this painting presents an obvious prefiguration of the Passion and Crucifixion, it is worth observing that in Hunt’s view God’s humiliating descent into human flesh is both the first stage of his later sufferings and a natural type of them. The painter therefore places great importance upon the laboring humanity of Christ: [The pamphlet says,]

The picture represents our Lord as the ‘Man Christ’ ‘gaining His bread by the sweat of His face’, presenting Him to our view subjected to the ordinary conditions of man’s nature, and compelled to realise in His own person the effect of the curse pronounced upon Adam and his posterity: ‘Cursed is the ground for thy sake: in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread’ (Genesis 3:17-19). Our blessed Lord was in very truth man in all things, sin only excepted. (qtd. in Landow William Holman Hunt 117-118)

Hunt emphasizes the humanity of Christ as the first step in Christ’s road to the cross. Here He takes upon him the ordinary ills of humanity, the tired muscles and the roughened hands of a laboring man. And though the indication of His death, the culmination of Adam’s curse, is but a shadow on the wall; it is, nevertheless, as real as the implements in the carpenter’s shop which symbolize it. In the pamphlet Hunt comments on the painting’s composition, “It is thought this expression [the pose of uplifted arms] is in perfect harmony with the incident and the work He
came to do. ‘Even as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John iii. 14-15).” (Landow William Holman Hunt 118-19). The figure of Christ for the Christian is the figure of the truth of His stated mission on earth: to build again man’s relationship with his God through the destruction of His own flesh.

Here is, as Hunt himself puts it, “the Man-Christ,” a powerful tenet of the Church’s doctrine of Christ. While The Beloved portrays the divine nature of Christ, The Shadow of Death shows His humanity. As an inexplicable truth of the doctrine of Christ, the Church teaches that He was both fully God and fully man: He “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). And it is through the manhood of Christ that He is able to ransom humanity through death, for as God He could not die. Yet it is the divine nature of Christ that made the death acceptable to the Father, for only a sinless being could pay for the sins of others: “he [God the Father] hath made him [Christ] to be sin for us who knew no sin” (2 Cor. 5:21). So in this work Hunt reminds the viewer primarily of the human nature of Christ, yet that nature itself casts the shadow of His divinity. For Christ to become human was an immeasurable grace. The Scriptures teach that the creator of humanity took the form of His creation in order to die like one of them. In addition, as a human, Christ placed Himself among the lower classes, yet another remarkable step down the social ladder. God as royalty would have been unthinkable; God as a carpenter’s son was unbelievable. And Hunt’s inscription teaches a yet more incredible truth held by Christians: that carpenter’s son would die the most shameful death of the era, crucifixion. The public humiliation, the untold agony—these details have been graphically portrayed for today’s audience through Mel Gibson’s film The Passion, but Victorian audiences were also aware, if less visually, yet no less knowledgably, of the level of degradation present in a death by
crucifixion if through no other avenue than the Scriptures themselves. A cursory reading of Psalm 22, another of David’s prophetic works, graphically details the agonies of the crucified beginning with Christ’s cry of anguish “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” and continuing with details of the physical effects of out-of-joint limbs and dehydration.

Hunt’s inscription makes another point about Christ: His obedience to the Father. Here again, he builds on the doctrine introduced in another painting, *The Beloved*, where Christ states that it is His “delight to do thy will O God.” The Gospel of John contains many verses which record Christ’s declaration about His purpose: “I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me” (5:30) and “I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me (6:38). The obedience of the Son to the Father’s will is nowhere more evident than in the biblical account of the Garden of Gethsemane where Christ went with His disciples the night of His betrayal. There He prayed, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou will” (Matt. 26:39). His repeated praying of this prayer in the Garden emphasizes the fact that He knew the heavy price He was going to pay for humanity’s sin—both in physical agony and death, and in separation from God—and yet He was determined to be obedient. The biblical phrase on Hunt’s frame—“even the death of the Cross”—itself indicates the magnitude of the obedience. Yet as evidenced by the Scriptures and Hunt’s work, the dedication to the will of the Father and the need of humanity overcame the natural dread of death and made the humiliation of both human life and human death of little consequence to Christ.

So Hunt continues his teachings about the doctrine of Christ in this work as well. The details of the composition, the verisimilitude of the interior of the carpenter’s shop and its tools, the recognition by Mary of her Son’s eventual death—all of these aspects of the painting merge
with the inscription in defining what Christians consider vital: the crucial duality of Christ. Mary is shown looking up from the chest of the gifts which the Magi had brought the child Christ, a clear indication of His divine nature. Her gaze connects Christ’s human beginning and His human ending on the foreshadowed cross. Her pose, a common one in paintings of the crucifixion, foretells her grief at the foot of her son’s cross. In addition, as Landow points out, the position of Mary and the position of the shadow as well as other details make this work “a bitter annunciation to Mary of her son’s fate” (William Holman Hunt 121). The merging of the Annunciation, which itself is a declaration of the divine nature of Christ, and this prefiguring moment of Christ’s sacrifice make clear for the viewer the nature both of the death and the person of the Servant-Saviour in Hunt’s work.

**THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD**

The Rhetorical Situation

Begun in the autumn of 1851 at Worcester Park Farm, this work was one of Hunt’s first serious efforts at being true to Nature, and he and fellow Pre-Raphaelite John Millais enthusiastically discussed how to carry out the tenets of Pre-Raphaelitism in it. Painting at night in the open fields then in his studio, Hunt tirelessly worked to get the lighting, both of the moon and the lighted lantern he designed, captured accurately on the canvas. He considered the work to be a “sacred privilege” (Bennett William Holman Hunt 32) and painted the piece with dedication to “what [he] thought . . . to be a divine command” (qtd. in Peteri 62). And it is evident from the labor he expended on the project that he took this commission quite seriously. The painting has become Hunt’s most famous work; indeed it is the religious icon of the Victorian era, enjoying unsurpassed popularity and even a world tour (Maas). But the most important aspect of the painting’s exigency, as Jeremy Maas relates, is that it is an expression of
the artist’s own conversion according to correspondence with William Bell Scott (15). Hunt’s own religious beliefs can be somewhat difficult to sort out, and doing so is not the chief purpose of this project. But Hunt’s own words, “No one can illustrate Christian history and teaching who does not believe” (qtd. in Landow “Shadows” 473), clearly reveal his own position on fundamental scriptural truths.

This version The Light of the World is the third which Hunt painted and is currently on public display in a side chapel at St. Paul’s Cathedral, London. It varies slightly from the other two and was completed by an assistant under Hunt’s direct supervision because of his failing eyesight. The copying of the original image (purchased by Hunt’s friend and financial advisor Thomas Combe) was prompted by its mistreatment suffered at the hands of Keble College, the recipient of the bequest of the work by Combe’s widow. The College had both changed the frame of the work and displayed it in a damaging environment. Hunt himself records his dismay over the treatment of his work by Keble College:

On June 23, 1894 I went to Keble College to see “The Light of the World.” It was in a new frame. I cannot trust myself to describe the frame. . . . In answer to my objection to the new frame, pointing out, as I did, that to substitute “Seek and ye shall find” for “Behold I stand at the door and knock” was to regard the figure not as the Saviour appealing to a sinner, but as a seeker after truth. . . . (undated fragment)

In his autobiography, Hunt reprints the published newspaper letters between himself and the Warden of Keble College who took exception to Hunt’s version of the controversy. Here is an excerpt revealing Hunt’s distress:

In my note I stated that “when the chapel was built the picture was placed there, but in a new frame, without the title, and bearing a different and totally inappropriate text.” This
statement is designated by the Warden, with more directness that courtesy, as “absolutely untrue.” In fact, however, when I heard of the new frame, and the absurdly inappropriate text upon it, I journeyed to Oxford to protest, and I saw the frame and the text myself, and remonstrated with the late Warden. . . . The frame and text were afterwards removed, and the former frame restored. (II: 415)

Hunt summarized the incident in a letter to the *Times Correspondent*: “I regard the fate of the (original) ‘Light of the World’ as one of the cruelest misfortunes of my artistic career.”

Though Mrs. Combe had provided money for a chapel as a place to house the work, the trustees placed the work in a less hospitable environment where heat from radiator pipes ruined it and the public was shut out. Hunt’s belief in the power and importance of this work led him to complete the third copy which was to be ever available to the general public. He states,

Both before and after the death of Mrs. Combe, having frequent reasons to doubt the safety of the work, I eventually undertook the subject in a second painting of life size. [The previous version was smaller.] This I had on hand for several years. To guard the replica against being shut up from the public or subject to any private caprice, I imposed conditions upon its sale. (II: 411-12)

Thus, this version was later sold to a Boston collector. But Hunt’s determination to make his work accessible led to the painting of the third version which hangs today in St. Paul’s Cathedral, London, open to all visitors.

The Inscription

The inscription is from Revelation 3:20 and is quoted in its entirety: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will
sup with him, and he with me.” In a letter to William Bell Scott in 1883, Hunt records his reaction to the verse:

> When I found it I was reading the Bible, critically determined if I could [,] to find out the flaws for myself, or its inspiration. I was in great anxiety on the point . . . The figure of Christ standing at the door haunted me, gradually coming in more clearly defined meaning, with logical enrichments, waiting in the night—ever night—near the dawn, with a light sheltered from the chance of extinction, in a lantern necessarily therefore, with a crown on His head bearing that also of thorns; with body robed like a priest, not of Christian time only, and in a world with signs of neglect and blindness. You will say that it was an emotional conversion, but there were other influences outside of sentiment.
>
> (qtd. in Maas 15)

The Doctrine: Christ, the Saviour-Priest

Many critics such as George Landow and Tim Barringer have provided meticulous readings of the symbolic details of Hunt’s most popular work. Repeating those analyses is not necessary here, but it is necessary that the reader realize that understanding *The Light of the World* is dependent on the viewer’s extended knowledge of Scripture. For no one can understand—or illustrate—Christian history or teaching without at least recognizing the symbols that relate to numerous biblical passages. In fact, John Ruskin’s letter to *The Times* on May 5, 1854, expounded on the work, “interpreting the painting in the way that a clergyman might approach a biblical text in a sermon” (Barringer 116). Hunt’s complex symbolism which has been the focus of so much critical attention has deflected attention away from the inscription and its significance to the overall message of the piece. For a great deal of discussion has taken place
about the costume of Christ, the sources of light in the painting, and the foliage—all of which are important details in the work.

But it is the portrayal of Christ as “Prophet, Priest, and King” (Rossetti 240) which prompted the strongest criticism. For the priestly garments aroused the ire of the anti-Catholic segment of the population, the nail scars seemed at odds with the robes, and the overall mood of the work seemed dark and suspicious. However, it is exactly these multiple roles which concern Hunt as a painter-preacher. The Beloved began the portrait of Christ as Divine; The Shadow of Death continued painting Him as Man. Now The Light of the World reveals the result of that duality: a figure whom Christians believe will forever remain both God and man. As man, Christ wears the body and scars of His death through all eternity, for Revelation says that “every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him” at the last judgment of the world (1:7). Those nail-pierced hands and feet will forever identify Christ as the sacrifice for humanity’s sin, and Christians believe His resurrected body proves Him the accepted substitute for fallen man. But according to Mosaic Law, that sacrifice demanded a priest to offer the blood, as implied in The Scapegoat. It was the priest who laid his hands on the scapegoat’s head symbolizing the transference of sins from the people to the animal and then sent the goat into the wilderness. So to fulfill that Law, it was Christ as priest who presented Himself as a sacrifice to God and was accepted. And so, Hunt costumes Christ as an Old Testament priest but with nail-scarred hands and feet, completing the portrait of the Man-God from The Shadow of Death with the God-Man as Light of the World, a title with which Christ characterized Himself in John’s gospel: “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (8:12). In the painting, Christ Himself radiates light as well as holding the lantern, illuminating both His path to the cottage and the inhabitant’s way to Him.
The inscribed verse on this work’s frame functions differently from the inscriptions on Hunt’s other works about Christ. Here is the first work we’ve looked at that directly addresses the viewer. The position of the figure, knocking, but looking out of the frame emphasizes the direct address of the work. The figure is the risen Christ, fulfilling roles both of Priest and Sacrifice, but the gaze and the words reveal the purpose of Christ’s ordeal: the salvation of the sinner. According to the Bible, the Old Testament Israelites had to believe that their sins were forgiven through the actions of the priest with the scapegoat; the New Testament teaches that the sinner must act as well and invite the Saviour in. And it is the character of that Saviour which is ultimately the focus of Hunt’s inscription: here is the authority of the Son of God, “I will come in” and here is the grace of the Saviour, “I will sup with him”: the will of God in action. But here, too, the free will of the viewer is implied; Hunt’s Saviour shows no forced entry: “I stand at the door and knock.” There is no violent requirement to accept God. Here is the humility of the sacrificial Lamb: I will remain outside and respect your will even if you reject Me to the end of your days. I will allow you to choose—life with Me or death without Me. Christians hold that as God, Christ has the authority to command worship and obedience. But the compassionate Christ is what Hunt presents here; the ultimate conclusion of his work about Christ is the preacher’s invitation at the end of the sermon. The church service echoes Christ’s invitation to the sinner to open the door and be restored to fellowship with God; the invitation by Hunt is to allow his viewer to act on the portraits of Christ which culminate in this one piece: to “behold” the complete portrait of the doctrine of Christ as taught in the Bible and through Hunt’s works.

And it is fitting that Hunt’s own conversion would produce a work that presents that same opportunity to the viewer, to see a true picture of Christ and act upon it. Ruskin sums up Hunt’s lifelong ambition, begun with Hunt’s own recognition of Christ’s purpose and person:
But to Holman Hunt, the story of the New Testament, when once his mind entirely fastened on it, became what it was to an old Puritan, or an old Catholic of true blood,—not merely a Reality, not merely the greatest of Realities, but the only Reality. So that there is nothing in the earth for him any more that does not speak of that;—there is no course of thought nor force of skill for him, but it springs from and ends in that. (The Art of England 172)

Hunt presents that Reality in a work which some critics claim clouds the doctrine of Christ, but the inscription clearly paints what Hunt believes are the true character and calling of the Son of God.

CONCLUSIONS ABOUT EXPLANATORY RHETORIC

George Campbell defines the expository type of explanatory rhetoric as having as its “chief design of the speaker to explain the import of a portion of scripture, which may not be perfectly clear to christians of all denominations” (232). The “chief aim is to throw light on the sacred text and remove the difficulties” (240). The text of such a sermon “serves as a motto to the discourse, notifying to the congregation the aim and subject of the preacher; secondly, being taken from sacred writ, it adds a certain dignity and importance to the subject, shewing it hath a foundation in scripture, the only standard of our religion” (245). He goes on to discuss the parts of the explanatory sermon: the exordium, the exposition, and the partition. Hunt’s paintings with their biblical texts and quasi-biblical texts fulfill the explanatory sermon’s function of defining a spiritual doctrine based wholly on the scriptures. The medium of using canvas rather than voice immediately catches the audience’s attention and meets the requirements of the exordium. In Hunt’s case, that attention was often negative—the critic Frederick G. Stephens notes about The Scapegoat, “People who demanded that art should always be agreeable, and a pastime rather than
a teaching, were very bitter against the painter for doing something that was not at all ‘pretty’” (William Holman Hunt 45). The linking of various texts upon one frame and through the same canvas, often with more elaborate connections evident upon further study of the inscriptions and their texts can certainly serve as the exposition. And one characteristic of the partition which Hunt’s works fulfill is “to exhaust the subject, insomuch that no part be left uncomprehended” (Campbell 265). Through inscription, frame, composition, and symbolism, Hunt seeks to portray as complete a picture of the doctrine of Christ as he believes it to be taught in the Scriptures. The full exploration of the text through the components of the explanatory sermon shows “a veneration for the scriptures, an avowal that the writings of the prophets and apostles were the only source of all their doctrine, and a desire of supplying the people with what might serve as a remembrancer of the subject of the discourse” (Campbell 250): Hunt carries on this tradition through paintings certainly striking enough to cause continued meditation by his viewers.

One of the purposes of Hunt’s exploration of doctrine in his explanatory works was to reiterate for his audiences the core doctrine of Christianity—the nature of Christ. His methods of mixing, for example, the typology of the scapegoat with the accurate portrayal of the Dead Sea landscape indicate that he is trying to fulfill his responsibility as an artist to his country: to elevate its citizens’ sensibilities and to support their flagging religious beliefs, assailed by the age of scientific discovery and material prosperity. The painstaking Pre-Raphaelite technique “create[s] a meditative image whose pictorial details prompt the spectator to experience Christian dogma more fully than otherwise possible” (Landow “Reading” 29). Hunt wants the viewer “to understand certain spiritual rules or laws” (Landow “Reading” 29), the doctrines with which explanatory rhetoric concerns itself. In these first five works—The Scapegoat, The Beloved, The
Plain of Esdraelon, The Shadow of Death, and The Light of the World—Hunt has painted his creed as expressed to William Bell Scott:

‘I believe more defiantly than ever . . . Christianity, even in its highest pretensions, must be true. . .’ [He details those convictions:] ‘the direct supernatural origin and nature of Christ; that He really came down from heaven, from the dwelling place of divinity; that He performed miracles, that He rose from the dead and returned again into heaven—there! I have almost written out my creed.’ (qtd. in Jacobi 607)

Unfortunately, during his lifetime, Hunt had to contend with not only the undermining of biblical authority by the works of Darwin but also the resistance of the public to even biblical symbolism and typology. In the Edinburgh Weekly Review, 1857 on “The Externals of Sacred Art” fellow Pre-Raphaelite William Michael Rossetti discusses “whether the artistic feelings and sympathies of a Protestant people of the nineteenth century are best met by a typical or by a narrative expression of religious subjects” (41). He ultimately recommends “that the artist of our day who works with the aim of impressing the mass of his contemporaries . . . will find it his wisdom to leave the type, and hold to the direct fact; to understand a narrative, and translate it into form rather than to symbolize a conception for translation by others” (44). Of course, Hunt does not forsake symbolism, either within his paintings or on the frames although he combines it with direct exposition through his inscriptions. According to Lynn Roberts, the Pre-Raphaelites used “symbolic or didactic frames” which incorporated both symbols and text and whose “spectator appears simultaneously to be presented with an opening onto a new ‘reality’, and to be shown an episode which he is to read as a moral lesson” (60). As a practitioner of explanatory rhetoric, Hunt focused on the exposition of biblical doctrine, especially of Christ, using whatever artistic means were at his disposal, especially the frames.
CHAPTER FIVE: INScribed DUTy

Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. Ecclesiastes 12:13

The concept of duty is one with which Hunt’s Victorian audience was well acquainted. Indeed in his correspondence with John Tupper, Hunt himself comments quite often on his own duty. With his extensive Bible reading habits, Hunt was likely familiar with the teachings of Christ about duty—on December 10, 1854, he writes to Thomas Woolner, “I most often read the Bible here, as the finest and most valuable collection of poems but with the greatest local interest and moreover I do so with a deep conviction of its eternal importance which increases every day.” Jeremy Maas notes that in Hunt’s Bible the Gospels are well used. So it is certainly possible that Hunt had read the passage in Matthew 22 where the Bible records Christ’s answer when asked about “the great commandment in the law.” He replied, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (36-40). Familiarity with the Christian teachings about duty was bound to affect Hunt’s perception of them and his use of the concept in his works. According to John Macmillan, “Hunt clearly defines his role as an artist as one carrying serious responsibilities, which, because of the moral and religious tone that he gives his work, becomes almost priestlike” (195). It is no accident then that Hunt takes the opportunity of portraying duty through the medium of art.

Although it may be possible to read Hunt’s The Awakening Conscience as a statement about duty, the work does not as clearly speak to the subject as the paintings which I will discuss in this chapter—A Converted British Family Sheltering a Christian Priest from the Persecution of the Druids, The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple, Claudio and Isabella, Valentine Rescuing Sylvia from Proteus, and The Lady of Shalott. These works communicate various
truths about duty such as its source, its hierarchy, and its consequences when fulfilled and when failed. While there is not the same progression of idea as in the paintings on doctrine, these works on duty do present a rounded portrait of the virtue.

A CONVERTED BRITISH FAMILY SHELTERING A CHRISTIAN PRIEST FROM THE PERSECUTION OF THE DRUIDS

The Rhetorical Situation

The rhetorical situation of the painting is Hunt’s entering the annual Royal Academy competition inspired by the “Royal Academy Gold Medal subject for 1849, an ‘Act of Mercy’” (Bennett William Holman Hunt 25). Because of the size of his design and the number of figures he wished to include, Hunt decided not to enter the work. It was still exhibited at the Academy in 1850, the year that the fury of the art establishment first fell upon the Pre-Raphaelites. Ironically, there was no mercy shown to this group of young reformers.

Inscription

The frame contains three biblical references. The top inscription is a portion of John 16:2, “They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.” Hunt then uses Romans 3:15, “Their feet are swift to shed blood.” This verse from Romans is in the context of characterizing the “none that seeketh after God” (3:11). This swift, destructive action is reflected by the activities of the druidic priests in the background of the painting.

The bottom inscriptions reflect the actions of the Christians portrayed in the foreground. Hunt begins with Mark 9:41, “For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.” He then finishes the chain of reasoning with Matthew 25:35, “For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was
thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in.” The hospitality of the Christians and the context of the scriptures clearly equate the “taking in” as a life-saving act, equal to giving food and water.

Duty Arises from Doctrine:

Thou Shalt Love the Lord Thy God . . . and Thy Neighbor as Thyself

An example of the relationship between duty and doctrine as cause and effect is Hunt’s work *A Converted British Family Sheltering a Christian Priest from the Persecution of the Druids*. The representatives of Christ—both missionary and convert—must risk their very lives. The missionaries risk theirs to communicate religious teachings such as the doctrine of Christ. The converts risk theirs as evidence of the impact that doctrine has had on them. Both of these groups appropriately “love the Lord [their] God” and their “neighbour as [themselves].” No other motivation would account for the self-sacrificing nature of missionary work. Hunt himself says that he “was designing [his] ‘Christian’ picture to honour the obedience to Christ’s command that His doctrine should be preached to all the world at the expense, if need be, of life itself” (I: 160). Clearly Hunt has as his rhetorical purpose the espousing of biblical doctrine both of Christ and of Christian duty. His choice of texts for the frame functions, too, as reminder of historical fact: “It is a fulfilment of the texts quoted in connection with the picture, and others in which the persecutions to which the disciples were subjected are prefigured” (Hunt qtd. in Sussman 73). Hunt also “suggest[s] that the history of England follows the sacred purposes figured in the scriptural narrative” (Sussman 71). Thus, there is a continuation of Hunt’s recorded beliefs about the nationalistic duty of the artist as mentioned earlier: “To whom but the artist is relegated the task of giving a tangible and worthy image of the national body and mind” (Hunt I: xiii). He might as well have added “and religious beliefs” to the list. According to Raymond Watkinson,
Hunt “succeeded in finding a religious theme which allowed him to treat Christianity in a historical, not a devotional or dogmatic way; as part of the national history, and with emphasis on moral commitment, devotion, on the modest domestic heroism of the priest and his little flock” (71-72). Landow believes that at this point in his life, Hunt was not yet converted, however troublesome that term may be considering Hunt’s friendships with major figures of the varied religious movements of the day. Nevertheless, though he may have seen the actions of the priests in the light of England’s history, that fact does not erase the religious principles at work in both their actions and his portrayal of them. The unconverted as well as the converted can recognize duty though they may not consider themselves obligated to obey.

Hunt portrays men who have executed their duty properly by following the example of Christ. The inscriptions on this frame reflect several more truths about duty. First, the inscription on the top frame informs the viewer that there are false understandings of duty: “whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.” Killing those who tell others of what Christians hold to be the truth of Christ’s death is no service to God. Yet in the words of Christ, “The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:20). Landow supports this connection between Christ and His followers of all eras, “The fourth inscription . . . echoes the first but also makes an equivalence between Christ himself and the missionary who brings his word” (William Holman Hunt 68). The Romans 3:15 reference to shedding blood only intensifies the irony. Rather than loving God with all their heart, the falsely dutiful, with the same degree of dedication, destroy those who do. Keeping in mind Hunt’s proclivity for creating chains of biblical reasoning, the reference could also be to King Solomon’s admonition to his son to avoid “sinners [who] entice” him, “for their feet run to
evil, and make haste to shed blood” (Proverbs 1:10, 16). Thus, those who pursue only the mirage of duty are sinners, not saints emulating their Saviour’s example.

Those saints are reflected in the quotations at the bottom of the frame and in the action of the foreground. Here Hunt portrays proper duty in action: the salvation of God’s missionaries from death, which in the Church’s view is the clear emulation of God’s actions toward the converts. The converts risk the same danger as the priests. But they follow the doctrine which Christ has set down: they love their neighbor as themselves. They go well beyond the “cup of water” which Christ commends, showing that they have understood the principle He taught: the servants of God minister in His place and thus deserve the same treatment that would be given to Christ Himself. Here again is doctrine resulting in duty: the Christian is Christ’s representative on earth; it is imperative that he reflect Christ’s nature as revealed in the Scriptures, both in how he acts and reacts to others. These converts demonstrate that the proper fulfillment of a Christian’s duty recognizes the person of Christ in others and mirrors the example He lived while on earth. The reference to “taking in” Christ is from Matthew 25 where Christ describes the last judgment of the world; the righteous protest that they have never seen Christ hungry or thirsty or naked, but “the King” tells them, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (40). As a result of their actions, the righteous are accorded heaven. So the Bible teaches that one reward of properly followed duty is everlasting fellowship with God, a facet of the doctrine of Christ in yet another form. This painting teaches that the source of duty lies in doctrine, regardless of whether or not that doctrine is sound. But the purpose of explanatory rhetoric—and Hunt’s picture—is to educate the viewer on proper Christian doctrine. Once that education takes place, the goal is a changed life that is aligned with
sound doctrine. The natural conclusion of properly taught doctrine is a properly lived life. Hunt’s converts illustrate that doctrine; his work prompts the viewer to emulate them.

THE FINDING OF THE SAVIOUR IN THE TEMPLE

Rhetorical Situation

Hunt used his time traveling by sea from Cairo to Damiette in May of 1854, his first trip to the Holy Land, to design this work. After arriving in Jerusalem, he used the resources there such as “the Talmud and Josephus” to study the historical details of the scriptural event “and also consulted the works of Joseph Lightfoot which provide details of ceremonial and a draft plan of the Temple” (Bennett Artists 78). He had great difficulty in recruiting models to sit for him since they were often unreliable about showing up. He also found himself at odds with the edict forbidding Jews to work for Christians, a result of the unauthorized proselytizing by Christian missionaries in the area.

In her notes to the Merseyside galleries’ catalog, Mary Bennett states, “Having already experienced difficulties at Cairo, he deliberately chose a subject requiring chiefly old men as models rather than unsophisticated and superstitious youths, and containing only one female figure. The Temple site itself at Jerusalem, though then inaccessible to Gentiles, may also have been a factor” (Artists 78). He was “able to sketch the view towards the Mount of Olives from the dome of the Mosque As Sakre in October 1855, immediately before his final departure” (Bennett Artists 78). Mary and Christ as well as a rabbi or two were painted later in London, and “the novel interior, designed by the artist, was finished from the Alhambra Court at the Crystal Palace at Sydenham” (Bennett Artists 79). Hunt’s foundational dedication to Pre-Raphaelite principles is evident.
The reaction to the work, when Hunt finally finished it in London in 1860, was mixed. Landow records critic F. T. Palgrave’s review in Fraser’s:

‘By choice and careful study of Oriental figures, dress, and architecture, the outward circumstances have been reproduced, if not with absolute certainty, yet with what is probably by far the nearest approach to fact attained in any Bible picture.’ . . . The Art Journal, which would not allow that Hunt’s naturalistic method succeeded at all, was apparently replying directly to Palgrave when it charged that ‘our conceptions of a sacred event have been taken to Jerusalem but to be smothered in turbans, shawls, fringes, and phylacteries, and there buried in mere picturesque nous.’ (qtd. in “William Holman Hunt’s” 651-52)

However, not all reviews were negative. Some critics saw in Hunt’s mixing of details and technique the meaning the artist was communicating. The elaborate costumes and careful placement of figures accompanied by typological symbols within the canvas were intentioned messengers of the preacher-artist to his congregation. “The Manchester Guardian, 24 April 1863, summed up its impact: ‘No picture of such extraordinary elaboration has been seen in our day . . . Draperies, architecture, heads, and hands, are wrought to a point of complete imitative finish . . . this picture is replete with meaning, from the foreground to the remotest distance” (qtd. in Bennett Artists 80). Clearly, Hunt’s “prime occupation in Jerusalem 1854-5” was a striking treatment of an innovative theme (Bennett Artists 77). In the tradition of medieval monks and their memory cues, Hunt created a work that resonated in the mind of the viewer long enough for the message to be perceived.
Inscription

The inscription is Luke 2:48-49, “And when they [his parents] saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?”

Duty: Love the Lord Thy God with All Thine Heart

The Christian’s priority as portrayed in A Converted British Family is to love God supremely. Those men regarded God’s commands as superior to their own lives. However, in The Finding, the viewer is presented with the obligation to place God’s work above family affections. The work portrays the only recorded event in Christ’s life between His birth and His baptism. Mary, Joseph, and Christ have gone up to Jerusalem, according to the Mosaic Law, to fulfill their Passover duty to God. Mary and Joseph have unknowingly left Christ behind in Jerusalem and have journeyed a day before discovering He is missing. Upon returning to Jerusalem, after three days they find Him “in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers” (Luke 2:46-47). Hunt records the meeting of the three in the Temple and places Mary’s words of rebuke and Christ’s response on the frame of the painting. Clearly, she and Joseph do not understand Christ’s forsaking their company for that of the Jewish rabbis. Christ’s reply clearly establishes a hierarchy of duty: “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business” (2:49). It appears that Christ has been at least three days “about [His] Father’s business.” As God, He would certainly have been aware of His parents’ distress, but His duty to God the Father apparently outweighed His duty to Mary and Joseph at that particular time. For after they find Him, “he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto
them” (2:51). With His duty to God finished at the Temple, Christ then resumes His duty to His parents. His time in Jerusalem lays the groundwork for His later ministry and provides a lesson in the hierarchy of duty.

This painting is important because it again blends explanatory rhetoric’s two concerns: doctrine and duty. Hunt presents an additional facet about the doctrine of Christ: the Son of Man had earthly parents to whom He was subject, but as taught by the Church, He had come to earth as the Son of God as well, with the divine agenda of saving humanity. According to biblical evidence, this eternal purpose greatly outweighed the temporary worry He caused His parents by His absence. But it did not completely negate the duty He had to them as an earthly son; thus He continued His obedience to them until a grown man.

George Landow sees in The Finding of the Saviour a moment of illumination for Christ, a time when He becomes aware of His earthly purpose to fulfill the Law and redeem humanity (“Shadows” 481-82). And his exposition of the painting is detailed and insightful. However, it seems to me that the moment that Hunt records is more a moment of illumination for Christ’s parents. Any moment of illumination, had Christ needed one as the God-Man, would have taken place on the first day that He confronted the rabbis, not the third day when His parents finally located Him. Instead, I believe that this event demonstrates His initial fulfilling of the Mosaic Law, a reason for which the Bible teaches He came to earth. The Scriptures clearly command holding God to be superior to others. The Ten Commandments begin with “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exod. 20:3.) If Jehovah’s people are to have no other gods, then certainly there must be no other people set before Him either. The instruction is plain that the regard for God is to take precedence over regard for others. Of course, the rest of the Ten Commandments as recorded in Exodus detail other duties relating to God as well as several relating to right
conduct toward one’s neighbor. The Bible’s command does not negate one’s obligation toward one’s fellow; it merely places those obligations within a hierarchical framework. In the biblical record it is Christ’s parents who do not understand “the saying which he spake unto them.” They do not yet fully grasp His purpose on earth though the angel Gabriel has told Mary of Christ’s purpose for coming to earth, and the shepherds have told both Joseph and her of the heraldic angels’ proclamation. In this painting Hunt pictures for the viewer Christ’s placing duty to God over duty to family, however distressing that precedence may be. Insofar as the performance of one’s duty is concerned, the Church teaches that there is no greater example than Christ the God-Man, who as God was certainly not bound to obey Mary and Joseph, but as Man was responsible to model for them the correct relationship to God: one of priority and obedience.

At the end of His statement summarizing the Ten Commandments for the Jews of the New Testament, Christ declares, “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matt. 22:40). From this statement, it seems that He considered this hierarchy to be the foundation of biblical teaching about one’s relationship to God and to others, and the gist of the entire Old Testament. As seen in the previous chapter, Christ declared that He had come to fulfill that Law about which the prophets preached and to which they demanded obedience. His coming, according to Church teaching, created a new kind of “law,” one based on love, not on imposed strict adherence to ceremonial laws with their rigid penalties. The Gospel of John records the change between the Old and New Testaments: “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (1:17). In The Light of the World, Hunt’s work clearly portrays an imploring Saviour, not an implacable judge. The duties of the New Testament Christian are not burdensome obligations—Christ invites His followers, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my
burden is light” (Matt. 11:29-30). And it was the charge of the preacher to instruct his congregation in not only the specifics of the duties but also their nature.

As a practitioner of explanatory rhetoric, Hunt wants the lesson to be real for his audience. The exquisite detail of the technique, the brilliance of the colors, the painstaking portrayal of those present at the scene, the very design which allows the viewer to place himself as part of the crowd—these are elements that embody “Hunt’s manner, like that of the Evangelical preacher, [which] helps the audience experience this event for themselves” (Landow “Shadows” 482). Mary Bennett records that the “reviewer in The Athenaeum of 21 April 1860 [declared,] . . . The idea of duty predominates above all” (William Holman Hunt 40-41). Clearly the message of duty’s hierarchy was not lost on Hunt’s audience.

CLAUDIO AND ISABELLA

Rhetorical Situation

The work Claudio and Isabella arose from common artistic predicaments: the need for money and the vagaries of patronage. A member of the Royal Academy, impressed by Hunt’s contribution to the its show in 1849, had commissioned “a picture of one or of two figures from Shakespeare, or from Tennyson, or any other well-known poet” (Hunt I: 211). In need of money Hunt worked up several sketches and visited his patron who unexpectedly disavowed any commission and harshly criticized the sketches. In bewilderment and despair, Hunt took the sketches to his friend Augustus Egg for a more objective opinion: “[R]aising the Shakespeare design, he emphatically proceeded, ‘This delights me’” (Hunt I: 214). Egg commissioned a smaller work, but Hunt later insisted that he take the Claudio at the price agreed upon for the smaller picture, even though a larger offer had been made him. Hunt, as usual, sought
verisimilitude, getting permission to sketch “inside the Lollard Prison at Lambeth Palace” and hanging the lute in the window to get the detail accurately (Hunt I: 215).

Inscription

The frame records the interchange, taken from Act III, scene 1 of Shakespeare’s Measure for Measure, between Claudio and his sister, Isabella, during his incarceration. Claudio says, “Death is a fearful thing.” Isabella responds, “And shamed life a hateful.”

Duty: Love the Lord Thy God with All Thy Heart

The dread of death is a powerful prompting to duty, as any lackey of a cruel dictator knows. This inscribed work considers the conjunction of death and failed duty. Claudio and Isabella is a portrayal of a moment of heightened tension between brother and sister. Jailed for fornication, Claudio has appealed to his sister, newly entered into the cloister as a novitiate, to save his life through sacrificing her virginity. The sister has obviously come to comfort him in two ways: one as a member of an earthly family, the other as a representation of a heavenly one. Given the Victorian reverence for Shakespeare already discussed in this study, the choice of this scene carries with it a great deal of impact: as Christopher Wood notes, “Hunt has deliberately selected highly charged emotional moments . . . full of moral and sexual overtones” (40). In outrage, Isabella charges Claudio with “a kind of incest, to take life from thine own sister’s shame” (III. 1) His twisted reasoning, claiming that her sin will become a virtue when undertaken on his behalf, creates not only drama for the audience but also anguish for Isabella. It also creates an ideal situation for Hunt to discuss the prioritizing of duty to God over duty to family, the same theme seen in The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple. But this time the duty applies to both parties.
Many interpret Christ’s summary of the hierarchy of duty to mean loving God with all aspects of one’s being: emotions, spiritual yearnings, and mental efforts. In keeping with this interpretation, Hunt juxtaposes the characters’ duties. As a brother, Claudio should be caring for his sister; he has familial affection and a responsibility for her well being which unfortunately conflicts sharply with his affection for himself. She, on the other hand, experiences a familial affection for her brother in conflict with her duty to both God and herself. If she could allow her love for her brother to trump her duty to herself, she would still fail in her duty to God. As a nun she will be charged with marriage to Christ. And though only beginning the journey toward that spiritual union, Isabella believes that to violate that holy duty by dishonoring herself to save her brother’s life is unthinkable; indeed, a “shamed life [is] a hateful” one. Both Claudio and she are faced, as were Hunt’s Christian priests, with the supreme duty of loving God before loving others though death be the price. And while death is “a fearful thing” as Claudio quite rightly states, there are worse things to endure. Had Claudio followed the hierarchy of duty and loved “God with all his heart,” as well as his “neighbour as himself,” he would not have indulged his affections for his lover Juliet outside of the proper moral framework of marriage. Had he not placed himself first, he—and Isabella as well as Juliet—would have been saved from the consequences of the improper indulgence of his affections.

Claudio’s failure in duty while living makes him fear dying and prompts his unreasonable request. Adding failed duty to failed duty—Claudio’s sin of fornication compounds itself in his willingness to prostitute his sister, the sin for which he himself is condemned—is no remedy as Isabella knows, so she maintains the proper ordering of duties, even though it may cost her brother his earthly life. Hunt’s details communicate the superiority of Isabella’s choice. Her brother’s body language suggests pouting over her refusal while he fingers the leg iron. The
detail of the scratched names in the prison wall—“Claudio/Juliet”—“links the obsessive quality of his love with his failure to repent” (Sussman Fact 112). Claudio’s request of his sister reveals the values by which he has chosen to order his life: he places love for himself over loyalty to Isabella, fully expecting that his sister’s loyalty to God will be overcome in turn by her love for him. However, William Michael Rossetti calls attention to “the church-spire visible afar like an emblem of religious duty controlling the immediate affections” (237).

Death is not to be avoided at all costs (as demonstrated by the Christian priests’ willingness to die for their converts and their converts for them); Hunt’s work declares that fear of it does not obviate the hierarchy of duty as stated in the Old Testament and confirmed by Christ Himself in the Gospels. Here is Hunt’s preaching in full power: “impressing as it does all the moral dignity of the subject, without any of that didactic tameness which is heresy in art” (Rossetti 237). Rossetti sums up the tenor of the painting in his review: “The work shows forth the opposition between moral elevation and moral cowardice, with that calm self-possession which is true power (236). Rossetti’s review reveals that Hunt’s contemporaries were fully cognizant of the conflict between duties present in the piece and recognized the artist’s accurate ranking of them.

**VALENTINE RESCUING SYLVIA FROM PROTEUS**

Rhetorical Situation

Mary Bennett records that the design for this work was begun in the summer of 1850 after Hunt had successfully sold the *A Converted British Family Sheltering a Christian Priest*, his entry in the previous year’s Royal Academy exhibition, to Thomas Combe. She quotes Hunt, ‘I determined,’ the artist recounted in 1886, ‘to paint a new picture for the next year’s Exhibition, although it was already late in the autumn to begin the background of the
design... But that I felt that, if possible, I should appear with an important work next
May, lest the enemy should triumph over our cause, as far as I could represent it... A
month’s pleasant and busy stay [at Knole Park, Sevenoaks] enabled us to return to town
[London]. Then the work of drawing from models and collecting materials had to be
promptly undertaken. Mr. Frith R.A., kindly lent me a suit of armour, which the servant
at my lodgings announced as a tin suit of clothes’ (William Holman Hunt 27).

The dedication and purpose with which Hunt painted did not overcome the opposition at the
Exhibition where, for the second year in a row, the PRB was lambasted soundly for its
impertinent rebellion against the art establishment. It is perhaps worth wondering whether Hunt
ever thought of the betrayed friendship in the painting as reflective of the perceived betrayal of
the PRB: in 1850 Millais accused Dante Rossetti of destroying the secret nature of the group.
Leaking the meaning of the initials “PRB” included in each painting precipitated the storm of
critical reviews of the Brotherhood’s works, causing Rossetti to vow never to exhibit publicly
again and causing Hunt a myriad of financial worries throughout most of his career.

Inscription

These lines come from Act V, scene 4 of Shakespeare’s Two Gentlemen of Verona

Valentine: Now I dare not say I have one friend alive: thou shouldest disprove me. Who should
be trusted now, when one’s right hand I’ve perjured to the bosom? Proteus, I am sorry
I must never trust thee more, but count the world a stranger for thy sake.

Proteus: My shame and guilt confound me. Forgive me, Valentine, if hearty sorrow be a
sufficient ransom for offence, I tender it here: I do as truly suffer as e’er I did commit.
Duty: Love Thy Neighbor as Thyself

This painting reveals yet another potential cause for dereliction of duty: sexual temptation. On this painting’s frame, Hunt inscribes the verbal exchange between best friends Valentine and Proteus upon the discovery of Proteus’s abduction of his friend’s lady. Here is again an attempted reordering of the hierarchy of duty reminiscent of Claudio’s: Proteus elevates his own love for Sylvia over his love for his “neighbor” Valentine. In essence, Proteus will violate both Sylvia and Valentine to serve himself. As a result, Valentine charges Proteus with the destruction of truth and trust. In addition, this betrayal by his best friend will color Valentine’s view of the world; not only the undutiful find themselves paying a price. Proteus’ plea—“Forgive me, Valentine, . . . I do as truly suffer as e’er I did commit”—hinges on the suffering he himself endures because of his sin.

The failure of duty represented in this work is compounded by the fact that, as in Claudio and Isabella, one of the injured parties is a woman, a figure to be protected, not taken advantage of. In the Gospels Christ enjoins the protection of the defenseless. In Luke 10 a lawyer asks, “Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (v.25). Christ responds by asking him what the Mosaic Law says; the man responds by quoting the commandments that place love for God above love for others and self, ending in “love thy neighbor as thyself.” Christ commends him for his answer, but the man, “willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor” (10:29). In answer, Christ tells the parable of the Good Samaritan: the story of the priest and the Levite who ignore a Jewish man who has been beaten by thieves and left by the roadside. Instead, a Samaritan, a people despised by the Jews, tends to the man’s wounds and assumes the cost of his continued care. At the conclusion of the parable, Christ asks which of the three “was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he [the lawyer] said, He that
shewed mercy on him” (10: 36-37). In neither Claudio’s nor Proteus’s case is there mercy being shown to the weaker party. Instead both men place themselves into the party of thieves, endeavoring to rob the weaker of their virtue in an effort to please themselves. Ironically, Proteus finds himself the robbed one: he has had Valentine’s trust and esteem taken away from him. In addition, he finds himself now in the position of the weaker, exchanging places with Sylvia. The lesson taught is that the Golden Rule—“And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also unto them likewise”—is broken at the expense of the violator (Luke 6:31). In violation of the Tenth Commandment, Proteus covets what belongs to his neighbor and pays a high cost for his sexual temptation.

THE LADY OF SHALOTT

Rhetorical Situation

In 1850 Hunt sketched an illustration of The Lady of Shalott for his reputed patron as related previously. When rejected, Hunt took this sketch among the others to Augustus Egg who admired it. Later when the commission for the illustrations for Moxon’s edition of Tennyson’s poetry came about, Hunt and Rossetti negotiated the division of illustrations, Hunt desiring to illustrate the moment of the Lady’s fall because of his earlier sketch. The finished drawing met with some resistance from the poet who remonstrated with the artist for his portrayal, objecting chiefly to the Lady’s windblown locks. Hunt records the scene with Tennyson,

‘[W]hy did you make the Lady of Shalott, in the illustration, with her hair wildly tossed about as if by a tornado?’ Rather perplexed, I replied that I had wished to convey the idea of the threatened fatality by reversing the ordinary peace of the room and of the lady herself; that while she recognised that the moment of the catastrophe had come, the spectator might also understand it. ‘But I didn’t say that her hair was blown about like
that. Then there is another question I want to ask you. Why did you make the web wind round and round her like the threads of a cocoon?’ (II: 124)

Here Hunt pleads the actual lines of the poem as justification for his design; Tennyson is not satisfied. Hunt concludes his defense by citing the varying natures of the arts, “May I not urge that I had only half a page on which to convey the impression of weird fate, whereas you use about fifteen pages to give expression to the complete idea?” At this, Tennyson let the matter drop (II: 125). In 1886 Hunt began two oil versions from the Moxon illustration, one housed in Manchester, England, and the other in the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut. He finished the works in 1905.

Inscription

Lines from Tennyson’s The Lady of Shalott frame the canvas on top and bottom.

Top: From the bank and from the river He flashed into the crystal mirror. “Tirra lira” by the river Sang Sir Lancelot.

Bottom: Out flew the web and floated wide. The mirror cracked from side to side. “The curse is come upon me” cried The Lady of Shalott.

Duty: Fear God and Keep His Commandments

Hunt’s design for the finished renditions of Tennyson’s The Lady of Shalott is a striking commentary on duty in general and the main character’s duty in particular. The Lady of Shalott finds herself in somewhat the same situation as Proteus: her loyalty and her mission failed when confronted by the natural desires of the flesh. And Hunt’s picturing of these failures is a warning of the consequence that can accompany the failure of duty’s being preeminent in one’s life. In this work, Hunt again upholds the scriptural hierarchy of duty. For as Thomas Jeffers says, “The Bible often seems Hunt’s only book, even when he’s reading Tennyson” (240).
As was his usual practice by the end of his career, Hunt published an elaborate discussion of his work. His pamphlet makes his interpretation of the Lady’s predicament clear:

The parable, as interpreted in this painting, illustrates the failure of a human Soul towards its accepted responsibility. The Lady typifying the Soul is bound to represent faithfully the workings of the high purpose of King Arthur’s rule. She is to weave her record, not as one who mixing in the world, is tempted by egoistic weakness, but as being “sitting alone”; in her isolation she is charged to see life with a mind supreme and elevated in judgment. . . . The Lady’s chamber is decorated with illustrations of devotion of different orders. . . . [S]eeing the happiness of the common children of men denied to her for the time, wavering in her Ideal, she becomes envious, and cries, “I am half sick of shadows.”

In this mood she casts aside duty to her spiritual self, and at this ill-fated moment Sir Lancelot comes riding by heedlessly singing on his way. . . . Having forfeited the blessing due to unswerving loyalty, destruction and confusion overtake her. . . . [H]er work is ruined; her artistic life has come to an end. What other possibilities remain for her are not for this service” (Bennett William Holman Hunt 57-58).

That the Lady is an artist is a telling detail which reflects Hunt’s own beliefs about the artist’s duty, a duty which he himself aimed to fulfill. According to George Landow, “Hunt’s elaborate description . . . leaves little doubt that he is setting forth his credo as an artist” (“Shadows” 483). But the application of the principles of Duty apply more widely: Landow contends that “Tennyson’s Idylls of the King presents his contemporaries with a complex poetic analysis of what happens to a society that is having grave difficulties in having faith and keeping faith” (“Shadows” 483). Thus, Hunt’s illustration with his elaboration on the Lady’s situation presents
not only the viewer but also society in general with these rudimentary principles of Duty: the authority behind it and the consequences of its failure.

Between the two oil versions (Manchester and Wadsworth), there are many design variations which Miriam Neuringer among other scholars has discussed in great detail. She contends that “a close study of the iconography of the objects in The Lady of Shalott reveals a highly consistent program of complex symbols with religious and secular importance” (61). This emphasis on religious significance is in keeping with Hunt’s lifelong belief in the duties of the artist in both artistic and patriotic realms. He links religious iconography such as portraits of Christ, shoes to indicate the holy ground of the Lady’s studio, and the extinguished candle which indicates the “all seeing wisdom of God” which has forsaken the Lady (Neuringer 67). While the richness of the detail in the work rewards careful study, it is not the focus of this study to examine all those elements present which make the painting essentially Hunt’s artistic creed. Others have done so much more ably than I could. My focus will remain on the Manchester version, the one that I have personally seen and which is part of the catalog of chapter three; however, I will refer to significant differences in the two oil versions which have a direct bearing on the role of the inscriptions as evidence of explanatory rhetoric.

Criticized by Tennyson for adding details not present in the poem to the Moxon edition, Hunt nevertheless expands the poet’s work in these later paintings and identifies the source of the curse upon the Lady. In the poem Tennyson names no specific authority, but I believe that Hunt pictures that power to be God. In both versions, the two framed paintings join the frame of the Lady’s mirror. In the Manchester version, the one on the left is an image of Christ in agony in the Garden of Gethsemane (Bennett William Holman Hunt 57). Thus, Hunt pictures what Christians consider to be the ultimate dedication to duty. In agony which is only a foretaste of
death by crucifixion, Christ pleads that He be allowed not to suffer. However, each instance of
that pleading ends with the epitome of acknowledged duty: “Nevertheless, not my will, but thine
be done” (Luke 22:42). In addition, the Lady is faced with not only the example of duty but also
the source of duty; the second painting, intersecting with her mirror on the right is a Christ in
Majesty; the seated figure is holding the orb and is crowned. The juxtaposition of this framed
figure and the mirror makes it clear that Hunt considers Christ to be the authority responsible for
the Lady’s restrictions. Not only is Christ the Saviour an appropriate impetus to duty, but Christ
the King rightfully holds power over the Lady’s life.

The placement of these figures next to and intersecting with the Lady’s mirror means that
she is constantly reminded of her obligation to obey, or as Neuringer notes, “the Lady’s moral
dilemma” (64). Sharing a common frame indicates that the two images as well as the mirror
share the common gaze of the Lady. As long as she keeps her gaze on her authority figure and
the images He deems appropriate for her, all is well. Even the sight of Lancelot in the mirror is
allowed because of the context of the shared frames. However, the moment the Lady forsakes
her duty and turns to look only at Lancelot, the curse comes upon her. With the curse framed to
be in the forefront of her mind, she cannot claim forgetfulness as the reason for her disobedience,
so the Lady is judged for deliberate rebellion. She “has physically turned away from the truths of
God and art, momentarily yearning for earthly love” (Landow “Shadows” 482). Here, at the
intersection of duty and doctrine, she exercises her free will and pays the ultimate price.

As we have seen, there is a hierarchy of duty. Based on the power and position of those
demanding the duty, the performer may have to elevate one over another. The Book of Common
Prayer (1662) with which Hunt was familiar delineates duty this way:
Question. What dost thou chiefly learn by these [Ten] Commandments?

Answer. I learn two things: my duty towards God, and my duty towards my Neighbour.

Question. What is thy duty towards God?

Answer. My duty towards God, is to believe in him, to fear him, and to love him with all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul, and with all my strength; to worship him, to give him thanks, to put my whole trust in him, to call upon him, to honour his holy Name and his Word, and to serve him truly all the days of my life.

Question. What is thy duty towards thy Neighbour?

Answer. My duty towards my Neighbour, is to love him as myself, and to do to all men, as I would they should do unto me: To love, honour, and succour my father and mother: To honour and obey the Queen, and all that are put in authority under her: To submit myself to all my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters: To order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters: To hurt no body by word nor deed: To be true and just in all my dealing: To bear no malice nor hatred in my heart: To keep my hands from picking and stealing, and my tongue from evilspeaking, lying, and slandering: To keep my body in temperance, soberness, and chastity: Not to covet nor desire other men's goods; but to learn and labour truly to get mine own living, and to do my duty in that state of life, unto which it shall please God to call me.

Even in the above description and definition of duty to neighbors, there is a hierarchy to consider: neighbors then parents then rulers, both secular and sacred. The catechism closes with a reiteration of the ultimate authority of God as the ruler of men’s lives. Duty involves appropriate attitudes—coveting is forbidden—as well as obedient actions.
And it is that lack of dutiful obedience which leads to the Lady of Shalott’s downfall. She fails to follow the example of the “eight cherubs holding various musical instruments and implements: these are stated [in Hunt’s pamphlet] to ‘represent the virtues of active and passive service to which the Lady has vowed herself’” (Bennett William Holman Hunt 57). She does not heed the portrait of Christ as king, pictured with all the appropriate emblems that reflect His right to command the dutiful obedience of His subjects, of which the Lady is but one. The intersection of these framed evidences of the Lady’s authority places her squarely in the middle, at the crossroads of humanity’s interaction with Christ the Saviour and Christ the King. So in this work Hunt again melds doctrine and duty. The Lady’s disobedience to authority reveals her lack of understanding of the doctrine of Christ and His right to command her. Obviously, the Lady’s story shows that the faithful carrying out of duty is not a foregone conclusion.

As a result of her choice, the Lady of Shalott finds that there are dire consequences to her failure to meet her responsibilities. Hunt portrays three results that evidence themselves in her work, her vision, and her reward. Though Wright strongly argues that the Lady’s tapestry is preserved, Hunt pictures its destruction by showing the ends of her threads winding tightly about her lower limbs. He shows the Lady with arms at an awkward angle; clearly the releasing of herself from the coils of thread is a difficult matter. Thus her creative work turns on her, making her essentially a part of the tapestry, which ironically shows the fulfillment of the Grail Quest which Sir Galahad has accomplished, whose “pure innocence and faithfulness have enabled him to obtain” (Neuringer 66). The Lady herself will never finish the tapestry because her own innocence and faithfulness have been forfeited through her disobedience. Her weaving of the reality beyond her window now includes her own plight. She has put elements of Camelot and Arthur into her tapestry, but from a distance, safe from the deceit and downfall of that kingdom.
Now, undone by the same man, Lancelot, who “flashed into the crystal mirror,” the Lady becomes part of his destruction. The Lady’s last work remains incomplete, a tangible symbol of her unfulfilled duty.

But there is another consequence of her failure: “the mirror cracked from side to side.” The mirror is an element of both the poem and the painting that has garnered much critical discussion. Though many of the Pre-Raphaelites portray the Lady at her work, only Lizzie Siddal places the mirror in its proper place, according to Jeffers. As an aid to weaving, the mirror would have reflected not only the outside world, but also the right side of the Lady’s tapestry, necessary since weavers work from the wrong side. This once-removed vision of the world is not a punishment; it is the only way that the work could be achieved. The Lady’s duty to look only in her mirror is not an unfair burden, a restriction on her being; instead it is the only way that her work can have any validity.

But the mirror cracked. The Wadsworth version of the work replaces the Christ in Majesty with Hercules stealing the apples from the garden of the Hesperides. Those who see allusions to the Garden of Eden and the fall of humanity through the agency of Woman contend that the Lady’s fall is as much a result of unfulfilled duty to the man Adam as to God. And like Shakespeare’s Isabella, Eve must reconcile the duties to family and to God. But rather than continuing to see the world through God’s eyes and obeying His commands, Eve forsook that duty, “saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise” (Gen. 3:6), and consumed the fruit, convincing her otherwise dutiful husband to do so as well. As a result of Eve’s violating the command to love God as well as her “neighbor,” the biblical account states they were cast out of Eden and forced to learn a new way to see the world, directly encountering its thorns and thistles in place of Eden’s painless
vegetation. In both of Hunt’s versions, the Lady loses her vision—of the world and of her work. The delusion of Lancelot’s reflection results in a distorted view of reality, a reality that fails to include the loyal performance of duty.

The Wadsworth version also replaces the Christ in Agony with “the Virgin of Humility . . . which embodies the theological concept that all virtues stem from humility” (Neuringer 64).

Once again, one is forced to consider the Garden of Eden. Some Bible scholars believe that the description of the appeal of the forbidden fruit—“good for food,” “pleasant to the eyes,” and “desired to make one wise”—is an illustration of the teaching of I John 2:15-16, “Love not the world. . . . For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” Eve’s prideful failure to heed this command, another failed duty, perhaps mirrors the Lady’s failure as well. This combination of allusions contrasts the humility of the Virgin who accepted the conditions implicit in Christ’s birth, social disgrace and possible stoning according to the Mosaic Law, with the pride evidenced by the Lady and Eve who considered their own wisdom greater than that of God who has imposed restrictions on their lives. The coexistence in the Wadsworth version of the Virgin in Humility with the Hercules Stealing the Apples points up the “consequences of [the Lady’s] neglecting her duty since he was able to steal the golden apples and complete his labor only because the guardian daughters of Erebus neglected their duty and fell asleep” (Neuringer 64). Though Hunt utilizes various details of biblical iconology and mythology, his message about the necessity of fulfilling one’s duty remains constant.

The final result of the Lady’s lack of service is her death. Hunt’s painting does not show her end; other Pre-Raphaelites portray her river voyage to Camelot and the astonishment of those who see her floating bier. But the inscribed reference to “curse” strongly suggests that such an
end is the logical conclusion to a failed duty. Considering the Lady’s authority to be God, the shroudlike effect of the tangling yarns, and the view of deceitful Lancelot in her mirror—her resulting death (a reflection of sin’s penalty imposed on the disobedient Adam and Eve) is not farfetched, especially for those viewing the Wadsworth version with Hercules and the Garden. Conjoining the Lady with the Fall of Man and the penalty of death, both physical and spiritual, again allows Hunt to connect with the doctrine of Christ, through a chain of reasoning brought about by the key term “curse.” For the Bible teaches that there was no other reason for Christ’s coming other than to have “redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us” (Gal. 3:13). Failure to fulfill a duty is a falling short of what is rightfully expected of one. The Bible defines sin as “coming short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23) and describes the “wages of sin as death” (Rom. 6:23). So reading the Lady’s “curse” as her death, the rightful recompense of failed duty, is a conclusion likely in the mind of Hunt and certainly borne out by the rest of Tennyson’s poem. Though Hunt created two distinct images of the fall of the Lady of Shalott, he nevertheless remained consistent in his theme of the failure of duty and its consequences, both those in the fictional world of Shalott and in the spiritual world of the Garden of Eden. His drawing on myth as well as religion in the Wadsworth version shows his familiarity with the classics and his expectation that his message would reach those knowledgeable audience members. His restriction to religious symbolism in the Manchester version which was the sketch for the Wadsworth version perhaps signifies his initial belief in the religious convictions of his countrymen, a belief that he found unsubstantiated by 1905 as the waves of religious skepticism remained rooted in Victorian England.
CONCLUSIONS ABOUT EXPLANATORY RHETORIC

Duty’s ultimate source is doctrine, and its practice and lack of practice is rewarded with good or ill. Or so Hunt’s paintings seem to argue. The struggle within human nature to put God and the good of others above one’s own desires is common. And though the aims of explanatory discourse differentiate between Doctrine and Duty, it is nonetheless true that one doctrine of the Bible is that the Christian has an obligation to Duty. So it is natural and fitting that Hunt’s works reveal the causal relationship between the doctrine of Christ and the duties of His followers. Or as George Campbell contends, “As in religion, the ultimate end both of knowledge and faith is practice, or, in other words, the real improvement of the heart and life, so every doctrine whatever is of use, either as a direction in the performance of duty, or as a motive to it. And the knowledge and belief of hearers are no farther salutary to them, than this great end is reached (286-7).

In addition, the dependence of the explanatory sermon on a biblical text, the foundation of Christian belief and practice, confirms the inseparability of its two aims: to explain both doctrine and duty. George Campbell describes the style of explanatory sermons as follows:

[Т]he style should be remarkably simple and perspicuous. The immediate end is distinct apprehension. . . . at the same time that it fixes their [the audience’s] attention, and even conveys to them more distinct conceptions by a happy illustration of things less known by things familiar to them. Thus the great truths in relation to the kingdom of heaven were ever illustrated to the people by Him, whom we ought to regard as our pattern in teaching as well as in life and practice, by the common incidents and affairs of this world, with which they had occasion to be well acquainted. (280)
Clearly Hunt has illustrated the precepts of duty in such a manner as to speak familiarly to his audience, both through their knowledge of the Bible and of Shakespeare as well as through their human experience. Hunt has followed the example recommended by Campbell and like Christ has taken his sermon topics from the familiar experiences of his viewer. This integral relationship between Duty and Doctrine, present in the explanatory sermon, is fittingly present in Hunt’s sermon-paintings and reinforces the claim that his inscribed works function as explanatory rhetoric.
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The purpose of art is, in love of guileless beauty, to lead man to distinguish between that which, being clean in spirit, is productive of virtue, and that which is flaunting and meretricious and productive of ruin to a Nation (Hunt II:493).

A picture’s value lies not in the image itself but in the cognitive and ethical use someone makes of it. Augustine

CONCLUSIONS

This study has examined some of the inscribed works of the Pre-Raphaelite painter William Holman Hunt as examples of explanatory rhetoric, a didactic form of rhetoric. As noted by Robert Connors, this type of rhetoric has been sadly neglected, and this study seeks to begin to remedy that neglect. As an initial treatment, this study serves as an exploratory work of two major subjects: the conjunction of the inscribed works of William Holman Hunt and explanatory rhetoric. These conclusions arrived at here are meant merely as stepping-stones to a larger exploration of these rich topics.

Inscriptions

The first matter is that of the purpose of the inscriptions. While most critics of Pre-Raphaelite works assign little more than a captioning use to the verbal texts inscribed on the frames, the lens of explanatory rhetoric shows that these writings serve as texts for the painted sermons by the artist. Yes, they do “guide the viewer” in an interpretation of the work as a whole, but more in the sense of a thesis. They are the point the artist is making with his work. They do not serve as reflections of content; they are the content. They serve one of two purposes: they instruct the viewer about a doctrine of the Church, or they instruct the viewer about a duty he or she must perform. This duty is also religious in nature for Hunt’s works reveal an interrelationship between Duty and Doctrine. Interestingly, these inscriptions end up having a stronger relationship to the viewer than to the works themselves because of the artist’s didactic purpose.
The second matter is that of the inscriptions’ content. As befits explanatory rhetoric’s primary venue, the Church, these inscriptions are often from the Bible. But a larger principle is at work here: in order to instruct the viewer, the inscriptions must carry with them some authority. So in the case of Holman Hunt’s inscriptions, they come from two accepted authorities of the day: the Bible and Shakespeare. Discovering evidence that Shakespeare is as authoritative as the Scriptures is a curious conclusion of this study. With this commanding source available to him, Hunt is able to not only connect Shakespeare and biblical doctrine and duty but also landscape and doctrine as he does in *The Plain of Esdraelon*. The tools of the preacher are those commonly accepted by the congregation; without the use of credible authority, Hunt’s sermons in paint would have little or no force. This melding of authoritatively instructive citation and painted sermon fulfils the characteristics of explanatory rhetoric.

William Holman Hunt

These works also reveal what some have argued is the most powerful of the rhetor’s tools: ethos. Hunt’s own firm beliefs about his faith and his talent naturally find their way into his work. The autobiographical records of his reverence for and familiarity with the Scriptures evidence his personal devotion to religion. In addition, Jeremy Maas, in describing Hunt’s personal Bible, notes,

“The three volumes tend to fall open rather more easily at some passages than others: in the first volume, for instance, in the books of Exodus and Leviticus. . .; in the second volume the books of Samuel, Kings I and II and Isaiah seem to have had personal appeal; the New Testament . . . is heavily thumbed, the four Gospels most of all. . . . Hunt did not annotate or make pencil marks in the text in his early years; but later he felt no such constraint: almost all the four margins around a gloss to Mark 11 are annotated in Hunt’s mature hand (5-6).
This study of the Scriptures combined with the unity between life and work makes the painted sermons resonate more powerfully with the audience. This dedication to not only the tenets of Pre-Raphaelitism but also to God made even the critics of the day eventually recognize and applaud his efforts. On the tour of the British Empire, his work *The Light of the World* found a worldwide audience because of the sincerity of the work and the life behind it. Two church wardens wrote Booth, the arranger of the tour,

> We wish to tender our hearty thanks for the opportunity you have so thoughtfully and generously given to us of having such an inspiring and deeply religious influence in our midst: we may say that it has been a real mission to the city of Johannesburg. May we ask you to be so kind as to convey to the aged and much revered artist our profound gratitude for and appreciation of his wonderful work? (Maas 201)

The obvious regard for the painting is no less than their regard for the artist.

Hunt’s ethos is a powerful force, equal to that of any preacher or speaker that commands the attention of the viewer and compels him or her to consider the message as well as the medium. As Lord Leighton, a descendant of the Pre-Raphaelite movement and President of the Royal Academy says, “There is, nevertheless, no error deeper or more deadly than to deny that the moral complexion, the ethos, of the artist, does in truth tinge every work of his hand and fashion—in silence but with the certainty of fate—the course and current of his whole career. . . . For as we are, so our work is” (qtd. in Hunt II: 463). Hunt’s personal convictions carried out through world travel and dedicated efforts ennobled his work and reached his audience. Frederick G. Stephens writes in *The Dial*, May 4, 1860, “The result [of 6 years journey to the Holy Land] is, that the picture [The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple] instructs while it delights; that it promotes the vividness with which all devout men must wish to realize the scene
pourtrayed [sic]; that it brings a real addition to our knowledge; that it refines, elevates, and invigorates our taste” (114). Those who saw his works through exhibition or engraving, read about his purpose in tract or catalog, or knew of his lifelong struggles admitted that his consistency of purpose informed his work and enhanced its power as these words in *The Times* on 8 September 1910, verify, “The painter of ‘The Light of the World’, the larger version of which hangs in the great church [St. Paul’s, London], should rest among the long series of illustrious artists who lie in the crypt beneath it; for none of them ever worked more strenuously or more successfully than he to inspire his fellow men with lofty ideas, and to wed beauty to religion” (Maas 208).

**Explanatory Rhetoric**

This study reveals the exciting fact that explanatory rhetoric has both a richer history and a wider application than realized. While Robert Connors traces out the history of explanatory rhetoric admirably, the visual format of Hunt’s use of the form shows that just as Hugh Blair widened the definition of rhetoric to include spoken forms of persuasion, so explanatory rhetoric can be widened to include the visual as well as the verbal. This study has demonstrated that Hunt’s works fit into a worldwide historical context of sermonic practices using visual elements as their key. This presence of verbal/visual explanatory rhetoric in the nineteenth century fleshes out the timeline that Connors constructed, especially in relation to the rhetoricians Hugh Blair and George Campbell. The didactic purpose of explanatory rhetoric complements the religious efforts of the day to instruct the Victorian in the tenets of the faith. This overlap enriches both fields—art and religion—and speaks to the complexity of Victorian society and the versatility of rhetoric.
In addition, explanatory rhetoric’s emphases on duty and doctrine are broadly conceived by the artist/rhetor and can be constructed over time in order to give a more complete picture of the concepts. These works can fit into the various rhetorical situations of the day and yet be taken as a whole when one considers Hunt’s *oeuvre*. While the foundation of the themes is found in religious teachings, the individual works that build on this foundation can vary widely from Old Testament to New Testament teachings, from portraits of Christ as an historical figure to symbolic portraits of His roles, from interiors filled with symbolic details to landscapes focused on one typological figure. The venues for instructing about duty and doctrine are as varied as the artist’s imagination. So while the works stand alone as sermons in themselves, they can also complement each other much as a pastor preaches a series of sermons, exhausting the topic before moving on. As a result, it is perhaps possible to see Hunt’s works, especially those about doctrine, as a kind of pictorial serial publication like the installment versions of Dickens’ novels so popular with the Victorians.

Limitations

These conclusions about Hunt’s works in particular and explanatory rhetoric in general are, I believe, only the beginning of a rich study of this aspect of rhetoric. For the purposes of this study, I discussed only ten of thirteen inscribed works of Hunt’s. It is possible that other scholars will identify other duties or doctrines in these works or interpret in entirely new rhetorical ways. These additional works—*The Awakening Conscience*, *The Ship, and May Morning on Magdalen Tower*—are all powerful pieces in their own right as part of Hunt’s canon. *The Awakening Conscience* may be function as description more than sermon with its simile inscription. In addition, though Hunt often painted several versions of the same work, these have not all been discussed. The variations in the design in conjunction with the inscriptions may yield
new themes, or perhaps new duties or doctrines. The overlap between duty and doctrine as seen in *The Saviour in the Temple* reveals that other of Hunt’s works may well be categorized differently with other valuable results.

So, this study merely scratches the surface of Hunt’s works, focusing on the inscriptions and interpreting them through the lens of explanatory rhetoric. Other scholars, perhaps even in Judith Bronkhurst’s forthcoming book, may well view differently Hunt’s inscriptions as well as the paintings themselves or the combination of the two. With the centennial of Hunt’s death approaching in 2010, this study at the very least offers a new way of looking at some of his works.

**DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

*William Holman Hunt and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*

This study has sketched out one way of examining Holman Hunt’s inscribed works. I hope that it has opened the door to a new way of thinking about the work of artists in general and specifically the interrelationship between the verbal and the visual within his works. My research has presented several avenues of further exploration both within the canon of Hunt’s artistic works and outside it.

Hunt’s strong consideration of his talent as a gift of God opens the door to looking at other of his works as explanatory rhetoric. Scholars can certainly extend this approach into his unpublished works such as diaries and letters. Hunt’s primary published work, the two-volume work serving as the record of the history of the Pre-Raphaelite movement and as his own autobiography would definitely lend itself to examination as a treatise on the artist’s duty and the doctrines of the movement itself. In addition, this study certainly opens the doors to examining the numerous written pamphlets and exhibition catalogs that Hunt either wrote or approved
which in their turn explain his works, their purpose, and their symbolism. Like the inscriptions on his frames, many of these works go well beyond mere description. Considering Hunt’s firm convictions about the duties of the artist in relation to his country and himself, it is reasonable to explore other of his works—the written as well as the visual—as avenues of those convictions, as explanatory rhetoric, and as manifestos of his creed.

And since Hunt was not the only one of the original Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood to utilize inscriptions both within the canvas and on the frame, extending this study to other artists of the movement, both early and late, is a natural course of action. In the case of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, a prominent artist using the verbal within the visual, the lack of stated religious purpose would lead to an even wider arena of explanatory rhetoric, as beyond the Church as Hunt’s works were beyond the sermon. In addition later artists with only the heritage of the PRB, such as Edward Burne-Jones, used inscriptions more as Hunt did, on the frame rather than within it as Rossetti did. Comparative studies would be another way of assessing the presence and purpose of explanatory rhetoric throughout the time period influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites.

Furthermore, just as the thread of the visual as part of actual sermons can be traced from century to century and country to country, so a look at William Hogarth, a predecessor and influence on Hunt, would be yet another avenue of investigation. A study of these two men may demonstrate an interesting linear exploration of explanatory rhetoric and even provide answers to why Hunt incorporated most of his text on the frame rather than within the work itself. The facets of the verbal in conjunction with the visual are numerous and worthy of examination.
Rhetoric

Memoria and Invention

In addition, the fact that Hunt was such a well-read person, especially of the Bible, could prompt an investigation into the nature of Memory and what sources he used as well as what sources he expected his viewers to be familiar with. A great deal of Hunt’s records of his working habits and decision-making is still unpublished; letters and journals are held in the Bodleian Library and the Manchester University library as well as other places worldwide. These primary sources often shed a slightly different light on his thinking patterns than does his published autobiography/record of the Pre-Raphaelite artistic movement. For example, his letters home from Jerusalem communicate more clearly the isolation which he experienced, an isolation which no doubt colored his own estimation of his work. Mary Carruthers details the memory training that monks used to prepare for preaching, separating the storehouse of memory detail from the *memoria* “an integral part of the virtue of prudence, that which makes moral judgment possible. . . . [I]t was in trained memory that one built character, judgment, citizenship, and piety” (9). In light of Hunt’s estimation of the artist’s duty—“Our art, like other pursuits professing to refine the human mind, must be exercised with a sense of responsibility to the nation which gives it birth” (II: 459)—considering the storehouse of knowledge he possessed, and expected his audience to possess would be of value not only to the study of Memory but also of Invention since Mnemosyne becomes the mother of Invention and Judgment.

Memoria and Audience

The meditation Hunt demanded from his viewers is a telling detail supporting the study of Memory in relation to his works. So analyzing Hunt’s audience from the perspective of Ede and Lunsford’s “Audience Addressed/Invoked” would allow researchers to construct a
characterization of the Victorian public that reflects a knowledge base that allows for the artist’s assumptions about his audience. His works constrained the viewers to consider the elements of the work, including the frame, in the light of religious imagery, for “countless sermons, tracts, and hymns taught Victorian worshippers of all sects to read the Bible in search of types” (Landow William Holman Hunt 7). Landow goes on to say that “during the reign of Victoria any person who could read, whether or not a believer, was likely to recognize allusions to typological interpretations of Scripture” (11-12). Meditation’s intrinsic relationship to Memory and the chain-making practices of ancient rhetors makes an examination of that practice in the nineteenth century valuable. The interaction between Invention and Memory in the creative process of this artistic rhetor may lead to a reconceiving of these rhetorical elements as no longer linear in the composing process. Examining a fuller group of resources than were available to me would perhaps be useful for looking at the process of creation which Hunt used. Thus, a deeper look at the audience of Hunt’s works and how he suited his composition to them would be not only a fascinating study but also a useful one, enhanced by the journaling habits of the composer/artist.

Kairos

Another profitable extension of this study valuable to the field of rhetoric would be to explore James Kinneavy’s concept of kairos in its fully fledged form. He says, “But the component of propriety and measure in rhetoric is much richer than just a sense of adaptation of the speech to the audience. . . . In addition to the rhetorical, they [kairos’ dimensions] embrace ethical, educational, epistemological, and aesthetic levels, all of which are linked to each other” (87). Hunt certainly has ethical and educational dimensions to his work. Kinneavy contends that the “doctrine of virtue” becomes an integral part of Cicero’s “ethical treatise on duties” (88). He comments on the aesthetic facet of kairos: the “relationship of the beautiful to the good” (91).
Hunt’s case, of course, there is great beauty—created through artistic technique and verisimilitude and especially color—which he strongly believes should be connected to the good—of mankind, his nation, and himself.

Looking at the explanatory rhetoric of Hunt as *kairotic* within the context of the religious controversies of the day would be an interesting study, to see whether art is used in the service of creedic beliefs or sectarian ones. Gorgias and Aristotle discuss the great power of the beautiful to influence the outcome both of history and of the human soul. It would intriguing, I think, to determine if and how Hunt’s works could be said to have affected the history of England. Was his religious focus effectively narrowed and negated by the scientific advances of the day or did his works have the redemptive function he hoped they would? If Kinneavy’s claim that *kairos* is interwoven into the fabric of rhetoric is correct, then looking at Hunt’s works which certainly respond to exigencies of the day and the art world as well as his own personal life could be a valuable implementation of the theory.

*The Rhetorical Situation*

More generally, analyzing the rhetorical situation in more detail would be profitable. Examining not only the personal and religious, but also the political and social factors that impact the construction of an artist-rhetor’s work as well as the viewing public’s reaction to it through the lens of the competing and complementary theories of Bitzer, Vatz, and Consigny would flesh out our understanding of the rhetorical situation as created or responded to by the rhetor. In Hunt’s case one would need to explore the changing rhetorical situation from the time of the inception of the work to its completion, for some of his works a span of decades.
Explanatory Rhetoric

To consider the conjunction of the verbal and visual as rhetoric is, of course, commonplace today. To consider rhetoric as more than verbal was radical a century ago, and to see rhetoric as more than persuasion is perhaps as radical today. But this study has shown that explanations, instructions, and education must come before any persuasion. And to use a mixed media to accomplish that goal is a clear forerunner of the visual rhetoric of today. The rhetoricians of the nineteenth century broadened the field of rhetoric, considering belletristic arts such as poetry and drama to have persuasive capability and to be worthy of rhetorical examination. In addition, they were sensitive to the changing religious climate and recognized that persuasion was no longer the necessary focus of sermons. As a result they prepared their students for this new avenue of rhetorical practice. When lecture after lecture by the prominent rhetoricians of the day such as Hugh Blair and George Campbell is devoted to sermon making as much as to sermon delivery, a significant shift has occurred in rhetorical emphasis. To then see those same principles utilized by a non-traditional rhetor in a field as far outside rhetoric as drama used to be is the focus of this study and, I hope, the kind of exploration Robert Connors had in mind. The correlation between broadening rhetoric beyond the vocal and broadening it beyond the verbal is a growth pattern only borne out by the myriad of rhetorics present today and the continued exploration and re-definition of the field.

One possible expansion this study presents is the possibility of categorizing rhetoric, not by its genre as is was done in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but by its purpose. Adding explanation to the list of discourse modes would be justified, considering James Kinneavy’s discussion of the overlap of expressive and persuasive discourse. He says, “And it is interesting to see what happens to information in a persuasive context, or to persuasion in a literary context,
or to persuasion in an expressive context” (“Aims” 62). It would also be interesting to see what happens to information in a didactic context. For just as education became of primary usefulness in Victorian society, so it may be today. Redefining the aims of discourse to include instruction is a practical response to present-day factors. The ethical questions arising from scientific discovery call for a clear understanding of the principles underlying their proposed uses. Educating the populace must become a priority before these innovations can reach their full potential. The stem cell research debate is an appropriate forum for what amounts to a discussion of doctrine—the sanctity of human life—and the duties that arise from that doctrine. Politics is another venue where explanatory rhetoric is present, even if not identified as such. Can a news conference on Social Security reform be seen, not as a means of persuading the American public (after all, how likely is it that the bill will show up in a referendum?), but as a statement of the president’s doctrine of firmly held beliefs about an issue and an implied duty assigned to lawmakers in light of that doctrine? Such a venue is not really a news conference, it is a didactic enterprise ostensibly directed at one audience but with another as its target.

The existence of explanatory rhetoric in the nineteenth century in the religious arena does not mandate that it remain limited to the Church. Then, it spread to the arts; today it has spread to new venues. Being open to and evaluating its existence today is a means of enriching the field of rhetoric through enlarging its borders. The conjunction of the verbal and the visual as a common practice historically in sermon construction means that our understanding of this type of rhetoric is crucial to a clear understanding of the history of rhetoric. Putting this piece of the historical puzzle in place will only open the door to a deeper understanding of the visual rhetoric in place today and allow for a wider definition of verbal rhetoric as well.
In a lecture at Oxford in 1895, ten years before his death, Hunt sums up what, in his view are the Obligations of the Universities towards Art. This lengthy quotation is valuable for its ringing call to retrieve the reforming power of Art and use it for the benefit of artist, audience, and nation. It is a call to follow in the footsteps of other great nations whose art lives beyond their time and still works its elevating force on those who view it. George Campbell may have warned his students, “We must always remember the difference between a church and a college” (238), but Hunt advocates using the college as a church, a place to hone and practice artistic skills, preaching the gospel of Art for the good of the viewer. He was essentially “a literalist who viewed art as a didactic instrument for furthering moral and religious values” (Fredeman 133).

I will end my address by endorsing the axiom that Art must be not only the elegant superfluity of the rich, and exotic nurslng. If it is to be a blessing it must be strong and bold, and capable of exalting our daily aspirations, it must offer personal comfort and confidence in moments of anxiety and weakness, it must rejoice with them that do rejoice and weep with them that weep; it should also fortify the mind for its national duties—exciting endeavor to make the State righteous and gentle; it should illustrate with unflinching truth our Religion, and embody our highest hopes, making us emulators in the competition towards bringing infinite justice and mercy to the world. If it is fit to sustain these feelings—and the Art of previous nations did all this in their time and manner—it were a sore disgrace to be careless of it. If it is not a champion for truth and for trust in the Eternal Father, it will become the toy of the idle, and it will perish with them, unmourned and disgraced for ever, to be trodden under foot of the race that is to be. Let us be the heralds of the long-desired era, and take care that the sign-manual of our
nation be one bearing proof of our sense of high responsibility. It has not been destitute of this sign of faithfulness hitherto; it rests with us to multiply such tokens and to make our Art a messenger of glad tidings to all nations. (41-42)

Two matters are significant about this statement, which amounts to Hunt’s creed about the artistic trends of the coming century. One, there are several biblical quotations within the conclusion, signifying Hunt’s familiarity with the Scriptures. Clearly, the Bible had become part of the fabric of his thinking. Two, the effect of these references is to couch Hunt’s beliefs about Art within the framework of explanatory rhetoric, this time in a verbal speech rather than a visual form. He sees Art as able to inspire citizens to fulfill their civic responsibilities and to instruct the nation boldly about its religious convictions.

I have come to feel that this study has met Hunt’s challenge to those at Oxford. Undertaken in the university, the arena of Hunt’s challenge to his countrymen, this rhetorical study of Hunt’s inscribed paintings fulfills Hunt’s exhortation: the study of Art within the University with the aim of inspiring those who view his work toward greater accomplishments. The study of Hunt’s works from a rhetorical perspective has certainly enriched this student’s life, and working with the beauty of his works has been an added pleasure. As Hunt said, “The eternal test of good art is the influence it is calculated to have on the world” (II: 482). The same can be said of the art of rhetoric; I hope this study has shown that influence to be a broader and more positive one than has previously been perceived.
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Dear Karen Rowe

Thank you for your recent enquiry regarding the inclusion in your dissertation, of photographs you took of the Holman Hunt frame inscriptions during a visit to Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery.

I am happy for you to use your photographs for study/reference purposes, providing the dissertation is not to be published in any way. If the work is to be published, a reproduction fee may be payable.

I would be grateful if you could complete and return to me the attached copyright declaration. The address is Picture Library, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, Chamberlain Square, Birmingham B3 3DH.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further assistance.

Sincerely

Haydn Hansell
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Dear Karen Rowe,

Thank you for your enquiry.

On this occasion we will allow use of the image of "The Lady of Shalott" by William Holman Hunt in your dissertation. If the work is ever destined for publication, then of course permission should be sought from the gallery beforehand at which time a fee might be required.

For future reference, please note that we have images of the painting in it's frame.

Good luck with your dissertation.

regards,

Tracey Walker,
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Manchester Art Gallery,
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Sincerely, Alex
Alex Kidson
Curator of British Art Walker Art Gallery Liverpool
Dear Karen,

Thank you for your enquiry. I see no reason why you can't use the photograph in your dissertation, and wish you the best of luck with your degree.

Kind regards,
Lorna

-----Original Message-----
From: kdrowe@bgnet.bgsu.edu [mailto:kdrowe@bgnet.bgsu.edu]
Sent: 28 April 2005 23:03
To: lorna@stpaulscathedral.org.uk
Subject: photography permission

Dear Curator,
On or about October 16, 2004, I visited St. Paul's on a research trip in conjunction with completing a doctoral degree in Composition and Rhetoric from Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio, USA. My project is a rhetorical examination of William Holman Hunt's paintings that have inscriptions on the frames themselves. I photographed The Light of the World. I am writing to request permission to include the photograph in my dissertation. Its appearance will be strictly not-for-profit, as illustration to my text, which because of the scarcity of reproductions of the frames for Hunt's works necessitated my photographing the work for myself. This project is in no way a published work; it is the fulfillment of my course work for my degree.

Thank you for your help in this matter. I look forward to hearing from you soon. Should you need any further documentation of my project, please don't hesitate to ask.

Sincerely,
Karen Rowe
Dear Ms Rowe

The Ashmolean does not regard university dissertations as "publication" in terms or repro permission, so you may use your photographs without further paperwork. Thank you for asking.

The new Summary Catalogue of the Ashmolean pictures describes the Holman Hunt 'Converted family' frame as "original gilt composition Regence-style frame made in England c1850". I am copying this to my colleague Catherine Casley to check the records as to whether there is any more specific information on file, but if you do not hear from us that is the best we can do.

If your dissertation contains information or observations that you think would be useful for the Museum's files, we should be glad to have copies of relevant pages/sections.

Best wishes

Timothy Wilson

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