

Université de Montréal

**Architecture at the Service of Ideology:
William Morris, the Anglican Church and the
Destruction, Restoration and Protection of Medieval
Architecture in Victorian England**

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Ce mémoire intitulé:

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William Morris, the Anglican Church and the Destruction, Restoration and
Protection of Medieval Architecture in Victorian England

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Abstract

This research seeks to examine and contextualize the origins of the modern architectural conservation movement. In this context, William Morris' founding of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings is considered to be the culmination of a complex history and process that lead to the movement's creation. Its genesis is presented as having resulted from the confrontation between diverging views and idealizations of the middle ages, the Anglican Church, and William Morris. An extensive survey of the origins, results, and effects of Gothic Revival points to the literary, ideological, and religious components which gave it its main impetus. The widespread restoration programs carried out in Victorian England in the nineteenth century are largely examined in relation to the Anglican Church and presented as having been motivated by its ideological concerns. Although this research does not manage to demonstrate unequivocally that William Morris' founding of the modern architectural conservation movement sprang from a direct reaction to the Anglican Church's religious program in the nineteenth century, it does reevaluate the causes and impact of the Gothic Revival and demonstrates how these were at odds with some of Morris' most fundamental beliefs and principles.

While there is a sizeable body of scholarly work examining William Morris' work as a poet, artist and socialist, his great contribution to the conservation of ancient buildings has clearly been minimized in comparison. This research project examines the factors and conditions that led Morris towards the creation of an organization which to this day remains highly pertinent and influential.

Keywords: William Morris, Anglican Revival, SPAB, Victorian England, Architectural Conservation

Résumé

Cet ouvrage examine les fondements du mouvement de conservation architecturale moderne. Dans ce contexte, la création de la « Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings » par William Morris est considéré comme le point culminant d'un processus historique qui mena à l'apparition du mouvement. Sa genèse est présentée comme ayant été le résultat d'une confrontation entre deux visions utopiques du moyen-âge; celle de l'Église Anglicane et celle de William Morris. Un survol détaillé des origines, des résultats et des effets de la « Renaissance Gothique » ouvre tout grand sur les sources littéraires, idéologiques et religieuses qui y donnèrent sa force. Les grands programmes de restaurations qui ont vu le jour en Angleterre à l'ère victorienne sont examinés en relation avec l'Église Anglicane et caractérisés par les motivations idéologiques de celle-ci. Bien que ce mémoire ne réussit pas à démontrer de manière sans équivoque que la création du mouvement de conservation architectural moderne par Morris fut essentiellement en réaction au programme idéologique de l'Église Anglicane au dix-neuvième siècle, nous y retrouvons néanmoins une réévaluation des causes et de l'impact de la « Renaissance Gothique » qui, de manière significative, allaient à l'encontre des croyances et des principes les plus chers à Morris.

Il existe une quantité admirable d'ouvrages examinant les travaux et l'impact de William Morris en littérature et en arts, ainsi que son activisme socialiste. Cependant, il serait juste de constater qu'en comparaison, la grande contribution qu'il apporta à la protection de l'architecture patrimoniale a certainement été négligée dans les publications à son sujet. Ce projet de recherche examine les éléments et les conditions qui ont motivé Morris à créer un mouvement qui encore aujourd'hui continue de croître en importance et en influence.

Mots clés: William Morris, Église Anglicane, SPAB, Angleterre Victorienne, Conservation Architecturale

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Introduction

Modernity in art and architecture is often defined by an imitation of the past. One of the most significant characteristics of modernity in art and culture is that almost all its phases or movements are the result of an artist's or a society's admiration for the past. If we are to consider that to many the beginning of the Modern era in the arts is marked by the arrival of the Romantic Movement, others may place the Renaissance as the starting point. Regardless of these specifics, it is clear that since the widespread resurfacing of classical forms, shapes and ideas in the fifteenth century, most if not all subsequent modern movements have found a basis for their most distinctive characteristics in the past. Whether it is classical, medieval, prehistoric and primitive or naïve, the aesthetics of the past have been omnipresent in the modern era of art. The nineteenth century in England was certainly no exception. The advent of "medievalism" as it is well known to many had a decisive effect on the future of architecture and how buildings and artifacts were to be treated from then on.

This research project seeks to establish that the genesis of the modern architectural conservation movement can essentially be traced back to the opposing forces of two different idealized visions of the middle ages in England: that of the Anglican Church and of William Morris. The importance of Morris' disgust with the physical effects of the Gothic Revival on the country's most prized ecclesiastical architecture has been discussed in many accounts relating to the creation and founding of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in 1877, but it has rarely been subjected to an in depth analysis in light of all the facts relating to it, most notably in relation to the Anglican Church and its development in the nineteenth century. The core of the subject we wish to investigate further has everything to do with uncovering the sources and origins of the SPAB, or more broadly, the modern architectural conservation movement. With William Morris being the founder

of the Society, we wish to better understand the passion and commitment that drove him, as well as the forces he was working against. More precisely, we will attempt to better ascertain the conditions and context that influenced his decisions and actions on the road to founding the SPAB in 1877. Although he is well known as an artist, a poet and medievalist, his work and identity as a socialist played a great role in defining his relationship with the built heritage of England and certainly had a decisive impact on how he would move from a quiet reflective life to one of outright militancy. Likewise, the stirrings in the Anglican Church of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries eventually went from theory and opinion to wide scale architectural movement. As it will be essential to demonstrate that the most infamous results of the Revival were ideologically driven, we wish to point out that this has not often been discussed as being directly related to William Morris and the founding of the SPAB.

As Andrea Elizabeth Donovan reminds us in her book on the subject of William Morris and the SPAB, scholarship on this subject is surprisingly scarce¹ and often quite dated or narrow in scope. The link between religion and the Gothic Revival has obviously been established and accepted by many, but it is rarely addressed as one of the primary elements that led to the creation of the modern conservation movement. Likewise, William Morris is very well known for his artistic, literary and political undertakings but has received much less attention than we may believe he deserves concerning his efforts in architectural conservation. This paper seeks to bring these two elements to the forefront in a discussion and survey of the elements that first created the need for architectural conservation, in particular how William Morris went about addressing the issue. The role of religion in any examination of the founding of the SPAB and the conditions that created a

¹ Andrea Elizabeth Donovan. William Morris and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. New York: Routledge, 2008. p.12.

need for its existence have been either neglected or minimized. We will seek to remediate this situation.

By the dawn of the nineteenth century, one could argue that a set of particularly secular values had exerted a substantially negative effect on the interest in traditional religious ideas and attendance in churches all over England. Although the actual causes and extents of this phenomenon are still subject to discussion, the fact that it really occurred is certainly not. There is quite significant literature supporting the idea that by the late eighteenth century, the Anglican Church in particular, saw the number of faithful dwindle quite steadily², and for a number of reasons. The efforts that were made to stop this erosion are at the very heart of this research project. In this particular case, the Anglican Church turned to its inventory of medieval churches in order to regain popular favor. As pointed out by Miele, the period between 1840 and 1875 gave rise to a massive program of church restorations³ whose total cost and budget dwarfed that of any new construction projects. The main buildings affected by these programs were the thousands of medieval churches all over Great Britain. As the Anglican Church owned the vast majority of buildings whose construction dated back to the middle ages, they could do with them what they liked. And it would seem that this is precisely what happened. The period in question greatly contributed to fuelling the aesthetic or architectural movement known as the “Gothic Revival”. As the budgets for restoration and the total number of projects continued to swell, so did the interest and taste for the Gothic aesthetic. As the Revival gained momentum, it is generally recognized that a great number of run down yet authentic buildings were restored in the hope of increasing their “Gothicness.” Authenticity was sacrificed in the name of restorations. Copies and imitations replaced weathered originals. Of course we may suppose that

² Owen Chadwick. The Victorian Church. London: Adam & Charles, 1966, 1970.

³ Christopher Miele. “The first conservation militants: William Morris and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.” Preserving the Past: The rise of Heritage in Modern Britain. Stroud, Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1996. p.16

the true intention behind this was to increase attendance in churches or at least give the impression that the erosion was under control.⁴ It would seem as though certain Church officials believed that the affection for and interest in Gothic aesthetics and features might have had a positive impact on the number of practicing faithful. This is a great point of interest in the context of this research project, for it is quite evident that the Church's struggle against the ideology and practice of secularism and non-conformity had a definitive effect on the physical buildings the SPAB would later fight to keep as authentic as possible. It is a fine case to investigate, considering the clear implications of architectural aesthetics being used as a tool or weapon of sorts by the Anglican Church.

Through this period between 1840 and 1875, there were still a few lonely voices crying out against the restoration of medieval architecture. Not so much in reaction to the fact that it was mainly an operation sponsored and carried out by the Anglican Church, but rather because it seemed important to protect the authenticity of these buildings from the destruction wrought upon them by both a slew of "restoration architects" and Church officials hungry to see their seats filled with willing members. The most famous "anti-restoration" activist or, some may say, forefather to any such movement in its early days was John Ruskin. Until the late eighteenth century it can be argued that any architecture having to do with the middle ages was still not recognized as being the most noble and interesting. It still was considered a barbarous time with limited cultural output and impact on the generations that followed, making architectural artifacts from the period expendable to a certain extent. Until the Victorian era, the revival of Ancient or Classical models in Art and architecture had been the dominant aesthetic movement in almost all regions of Europe. This new popular interest and respect for the aesthetic and culture of the middle ages was, without a doubt, directly

⁴ Christopher Miele. "A small Knot of Cultivated People: William Morris and Ideologies of Protection." *Art Journal*. Vol.54, Summer 1995, p.73.

resulting from the impact of the Romantics in the century that preceded the Victorian era.

Ruskin's chapter in his *Stones of Venice* entitled "The Nature of Gothic"⁵ is still considered to be one of the finest and most concise defenses of the ideology behind architectural conservation. The impact on William Morris, founder of the SPAB, was quite fundamental. As Morris came of age at the height of the great Anglican restoration projects, it was clear that his disgust and contempt for them would not long remain secret. As the nineteenth century progressed, Morris became more vocal about the evils of restoration and the obvious benefits to society when ancient buildings are conserved in their most original forms, with the least amount of modifications made to any of their features. His idea of conservation became known as "anti-restoration" and eventually put him at odds with those who were carrying out these restorations, i.e. the Anglican Church and the architects who benefited from their commissions. These entities would not only find themselves at odds with Morris on the subject of conservation for simply aesthetic reasons, but also due to religious, socio-economic issues and, in Morris' opinion, their involvement in perpetuating capitalist values. While Morris would later devote a substantial amount of his time and energy as a militant socialist, it seems important to point out that the creation of the SPAB in 1877 still had more to do with architecture and religion than with socialism. With the dividing line between Morris' political, artistic and aesthetic views increasingly blurred as the century wore on, the years preceding the creation of the SPAB are certainly the most informative for our purposes. A great portion of this is to better understand the role of religion or "anti-religion" as an important building block in the creation of the SPAB.

⁵ John Ruskin. "The Nature of Gothic", *On Art and Life*, London: Penguin Books, 2004. p.1-57.

As mentioned by Miele, it is common knowledge that certain historians, such as E.P. Thompson⁶ put forward the now quite generally accepted hypothesis that the SPAB may have been created with the true intention of serving as a vehicle for Morris' socialist views and beliefs. Although this view may be accepted by some, it exposes a very limited interpretation of one of Morris' greatest accomplishments. While his socialist views are well known and emphasized, his love of knowledge and history, his aesthetic awareness and sincere desire to preserve the authenticity of monuments for future generations cannot be underestimated. Moreover, the traditionally secular and even "anti clerical" tendencies usually associated with socialism are nowhere to be found, at least explicitly, in Morris' discourse on conservation. On the other hand, his annoyance with and dislike for the Church as careless owners of the nation's greatest architectural treasure certainly is. It is fascinating to examine Morris' relationship with religion, as it is remarkably absent in his adult life. Professor George P. Landow expresses this quite well:

Unlike Pugin, his medievalism included no place for a revival of Roman Catholic or any other faith, and when he creates his ideal worlds in fantasies, religion never plays any role. In his mature years, Morris seems simply to have ignored religion and did not follow one of the usual Victorian paths — becoming an atheist (as did Swinburne and Thomson), or developing his own form of liberal Christianity (as did Ruskin, Tennyson).⁷

Morris may not have followed in his contemporaries' footsteps regarding religion, but he certainly was deeply influenced by his fellow medievalist Ruskin, especially concerning the symbolic potential held by architecture. As we began to touch upon earlier, Ruskin links the quality of a work to the conditions of the worker who made it, be it social, cultural or

⁶ E.P. Thomson. William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary. Revised edition, London: Merlin Press, 1977.

⁷ Landow, George P. "Religion in Willam Morris's Work". The Victorian Web. April 25th, 2010. <<http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/morris/wmrelig.html>>

economic, and then moves on to suggest that the architecture of the middle ages is superior in all aspects to that of his own time. Morris often mentions this concept put forward by Ruskin in his speeches and writings on art and architecture. It would be fair to declare that both men idealized the middle ages along with its cultural and artistic production. This ideal of centuries long past came to permeate all aspects of Morris' philosophy and often served to fuel his critique of modern society. We will examine the question of how this idealization which Morris projected onto the middle ages affected or inspired his work as an architectural conservationist. More importantly, how did this idealization come to be at odds with that of the Anglican Church and various ecclesiological groups?

The research undertaken here will further examine the motives of actors in the Gothic Revival most notably Church officials, ecclesiological groups, and architects. We will do so in constant relation to Morris's creation of the SPAB as an active group that defended ancient buildings from restoration or destruction. In his socialistic mindset, Morris saw the conservation of authentic medieval architecture as a way to inform his contemporaries of the excellence achieved by "free" laborers living and working in a pre-industrial, non-capitalist world. He also seemed to find satisfaction in challenging the validity of the Church as a figure of authority and most important owner of English architectural artifacts. By contrast, Church officials who pushed for massive restoration programs saw the Gothic aesthetic as a way to lure back or at least stop the erosion of church attendance, somehow appealing to the populations' affection for "gothicness" in their places of worship. Therefore we can infer that through the Church's eyes, the restoration movement was a means to increase its power, prosperity, and influence, while Morris saw it as a means for them to erase meaningful pieces of social history. Although these concepts are not "symmetrically" opposed, there is definitely a conflict worth examining.

As we will further outline, the original architectural features of medieval Catholic churches that were directly linked to liturgy and ceremony were considered highly important to restore and rebuild by ecclesiological groups. While carefully avoiding accusations of promoting a return to Catholicism or “popism,” these groups essentially advocated the return of medieval pomp and ceremony to their institutions. In the wake of all this enthusiasm for the Gothic aesthetic and the return of the “ancient” Christian mass to the churches of England, the line between Catholic and Anglican was once again being blurred. According to most of the literature on the subject, it hardly was an issue for ecclesiological societies at the height of the Gothic Revival. Their passion and preference for the medieval ceremony can easily be interpreted as supporting an idealized conception of their Church in the middle ages, and longing for direct links to the early Church. At times this interpretation of history even seemed aimed at erasing certain other major, undeniable developments from people’s memory. As Miele points out, some even suggested that the restoration programs were deliberately aimed only at accentuating pre-reformation work,⁸ where a sixteenth century addition or independent construction, for example, would be willingly destroyed in order to better show restored, Gothic elements. Through its selective restoration programs the Church created a system of fundraising, designing and building which left almost no authentic medieval church untouched in all of England. Although it was later said, even by one of their own, that restorations had no direct effect on church attendance,⁹ the thirty-five year building program gave way to the creation of the modern architectural conservation movement and left William Morris with ample justification to charge the Church with carelessness, ignorance, and destruction of public property.

⁸ Christopher Miele. “The first conservation militants: William Morris and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.” Preserving the Past: The rise of Heritage in Modern Britain. Stroud, Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1996. p.23

⁹ Ibid. p.22

Chapter 1 Creating a Modern Conservation Movement

1877: The founding of the SPAB

“History (so called) has remembered the kings and warriors, because they destroyed; Art has remembered the people, because they created.”¹⁰

William Morris was a controversial figure in his time; his temper and uncompromising attitude could potentially have been his undoing, yet it certainly was not the case. When we seek to understand the impetus behind his creation of the SPAB and his impact in the early years of its existence, it is clear that Morris did not choose the easiest route to accomplish his goals. While it remains unsure what these goals actually were, there is certainty in the fact that the SPAB survives to this day and has arguably become the most reputed and recognizable name in architectural conservation. Morris was a highly contradictory figure at times, as we will mention later when we demonstrate that, while he was critical of restoration, his firm also benefited from it handsomely. While it is our firm conviction that Morris’ idealization of the middle ages, as well as his opposition to the Church’s, was at the very root of his reasons for creating the SPAB, we have yet to locate any text where he would claim this in a clear and explicit manner. It is rather through an examination of certain constants in his work that we shall be successful in demonstrating this fundamental element.

Concerning the arts, architecture and conservation, a few elements were continuously present in the writings and actions of William Morris; most notably his seemingly unwavering belief in the superiority of the past, as well

¹⁰ William Morris. “The Art of the People” (1879). William Morris on Art and Socialism. Ed. Norman Kelvin. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1999. p.22.

as his belief that architecture serves an essential didactic function. Both these propositions serve to strengthen our argument claiming that Morris' idealization of the middle ages was an integral part of the creation of the architectural conservation movement. We shall examine more specific examples in regards to this in the following paragraphs, as the work of Morris is quite imbued with it throughout. The passion and the unrestrained anger that is recognizable in his letter sent to *The Atheneum* in 1877 may reveal many things about Morris' temperament, but it also serves as a reference point from which we can contrast and evaluate the more moderate *Manifesto* he wrote a short while afterwards. In nurturing his image as a man of the people with a noble purpose, Morris himself fed into the sort of elitism he sometimes condemned, further convincing us that his seemingly humanistic endeavor as a conservationist may have been somewhat tainted by the pursuit of his own personal goals. As we will continue to examine the makings of the modern architectural conservation movement and the part played by William Morris, we will be faced repeatedly with the irony and contradictions that have made a myth of the man.

The story of Morris' conversion to "antirestoration" is well known to those interested in such things, and, as Chris Miele points out, when it came in 1877 "it was sudden and total, just as his politicization had been in the previous autumn."¹¹ Some have presented the exact moment of "conversion" as something of a revelation or realization, not unlike episodes on the road to Damascus, Archimedes' bath, or Newton and the apple. While this may be the result of significant exaggeration, the famous letter to *The Athenaeum* does tell the tale of a man who was carrying on his normal routine, when he was stopped in his tracks by what he considered to be completely unacceptable, as the opening lines demonstrate: "My eye just now caught the word 'restoration' in the morning paper, and, on looking closer, I saw that this time it is nothing less than the Minster of Tewkesbury that is to be destroyed by Sir

¹¹ Christopher Miele. "A Small Knot of Cultivated People: William Morris and Ideologies of Protection." *Art Journal*. vol.54, summer 1995, p.75.

Gilbert Scott.”¹² Apart from the exasperation we detect in his voice, the direct attack on a well known architect sets the tone for the rest of the letter, which, although it is a clear call to arms for conservationists, comes off as some sort of a rant from another perspective. The utter contempt William Morris had for the profession of architect at this time will be properly outlined in the following section, yet it is remarkable how in this very same letter to the *Athenaeum*, he goes after both the Church and the profession in a fairly arrogant and uncompromising manner. In his plea to assemble like-minded patrons of architectural conservation, he seems to be doing his best to alienate himself from those who have the greatest power and influence on the buildings he wishes to protect:

Though I admit that the architects are, with very few exceptions, hopeless, because interest, habit, and ignorance bind them, and that the clergy are hopeless, because their order, habit, and an ignorance yet grosser, bind them; still there must be many people whose ignorance is accidental rather than inveterate, whose good sense could surely be touched if it were clearly put to them that they were destroying what they, or, more surely still, their sons and sons’ sons, would one day fervently long for, and which no wealth or energy could ever buy again for them.¹³

The mention of interest, habit, and ignorance in this letter brings to mind the article by Miele we will be carefully reviewing in the following section on the business of restoration. While the letter to *The Athenaeum* sent by Morris was certainly more extreme than the manifesto for the SPAB that would later be submitted, it may be considered more truthful and to the point in its lack of diplomacy, as it was made clear early on that the SPAB was not going to compromise in order to influence or appease those parties we would think it wished to bring over to its side. Miele describes the early incarnation

¹² William Morris. “Letter to *Athenaeum*, 10 March 1877.” William Morris: On Architecture. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.

¹³Ibid.

of the SPAB and the effect this may have had on its progress: “Strongly secular in character (at times positively anti-clerical) and hostile on almost all occasions to professional architects, it was cut off from the very institutions it had to influence.”¹⁴ Although it was a proper “Society” after its founding in the fall of 1877, the SPAB remained strongly centred around William Morris in its first years. As the founder, the major patron and principle ideologue, Morris set the tone and determined the line that would be followed along with a restricted number of his associates, most notably Philip Webb.

The extremism of Morris’ language in the famous letter is also remarkable on how it endangers the chance for the society’s own success. When he explicitly names Gilbert Scott, who will apparently “destroy” the Minster of Tewkesbury, Morris risked awakening the anger of the single most important potential contributor to the cause. As we know that Scott was probably the professional architect who came to be the very embodiment of the business-minded “restoration architect,” he metaphorically held the keys to the kingdom, as Miele points out:

Scott was one of a handful of architects in touch with the church building elites who could actually have helped the society (...) He had the respect of the Incorporated Church Building Society and countless local architectural societies, in addition to many influential contacts among the diocesan hierarchy and parochial clergy. More important though was the respect he commanded within his own profession.¹⁵

We may interpret Morris’ affront to the likes of Scott, the whole profession, and the Church as his being either reckless or calculating in some way. Either way, the strategy, if there was any, did not leave anyone indifferent. The following step was much more moderate in its passion, tone and impact.

¹⁴ Christopher Miele. “The first conservation militants: William Morris and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.” *Preserving the Past: The rise of Heritage in Modern Britain*. Stroud, Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1996. p.20

¹⁵Ibid. p.24

In all truth, the “Manifesto for the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings of 1877” presents itself as a complete “about face” when compared to the famous letter to *The Athenaeum*. The anger and antagonism are all but gone and the denunciation has given way to an almost apologetic or sympathetic approach, as Miele points out: “In its final form the Society’s manifesto forgives architects for having been seduced by the false doctrines of the Gothic Revival into believing that a great modern style could be founded on the study of past architecture.”¹⁶ In taking such an approach, Morris also readjusted his position in reference to the “ignorance” of the churchmen and architects he referred to in the almost libellous letter. Although he may have expressed an appreciation for the great interest and knowledge of the Gothic aesthetic in the Victorian era, he never could admit that the architects that were his contemporaries had anything valuable or original to offer: “For Architecture, long decaying, died out, as a popular art at least, just as the knowledge of medieval art was born. So that the civilised world of the nineteenth century has no style of its own amidst its wide knowledge of the styles of other centuries.”¹⁷ These were harsh words for his contemporaries, but certainly not without justification; it would be difficult to characterize the work of restoration architects as anything more than copies or imagined forms born from the study of those from a bygone era. The fact that Morris recognised value in the great popularity and passion for the medieval aesthetic that had arisen in his day is to be expected, as men like him, Pugin, and Ruskin had all been part of this fervour. In the opening lines of the manifesto, Morris does his best to praise the interest and knowledge, yet does not fail to point out the destructive force of what may at first seem without reproach:

No doubt within the last fifty years a new interest, almost like another sense, has arisen in these ancient monuments of art; and they have become the subject of one of the most interesting of studies, and of an enthusiasm, religious, historical, artistic,

¹⁶ Christopher Miele. “A Small Knot of Cultivated People: William Morris and Ideologies of Protection.” *Art Journal*. vol.54, summer 1995, p.75

¹⁷ William Morris. “Manifesto for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.” (1877) *William Morris: On Architecture*. Ed. Christopher Miele. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.

which is one of the undoubted gains of our time (...) We think that those last fifty years of knowledge and attention have done more for their destruction than all the foregoing centuries of revolution, violence and contempt.¹⁸

Morris' appreciation for the interest his contemporaries had in medieval architecture leads us to the question of his belief in the superiority of the past. Although there are numerous passages available for the purposes of demonstrating his dislike for the "wretched" times he lived in, Morris never quite came to admit in any explicit manner that he favoured societal models from England's medieval past. We can even point out that he took care of denying this very fact in a clear manner in the opening passages of a lecture on the lesser arts entitled "The Decorative Arts", given before the Trades Guild of Learning in London on May 2, 1877. In this passage, Morris prepares the crowd for one of his elegant tongue lashings by pre-emptively interpreting how the elements of his speech may be received by the crowd. It would seem as though Morris was quite conscious of his reputation and well aware that he was believed to favour the past, despise the present and remain sceptical of what the future could possibly hold, as he demonstrates here:

I must ask you therefore from the outset to believe that whatever I may blame or whatever I may praise, I neither, when I think of what history has been, am inclined to lament the past, to despise the present, or despair of the future; that I believe all the change and stir about us is a sign of the world's life, and that it will lead-by ways, indeed, of which we have no guess-to the bettering of all mankind.¹⁹

Although I can believe that Morris was sincere in writing this, I also believe he was somewhat forgetful of all he had written or said prior to this

¹⁸ William Morris. "Manifesto for the Protection of Ancient Buildings". William Morris: On Architecture. Ed. Christopher Miele. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.

¹⁹ William Morris. "The Lesser Arts (1877)". William Morris on Art and Socialism. Ed. Norman Kelvin. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1999. p.1

and all that would follow. I suspect that this speech given on March 2, 1877, was written just before Morris awoke to a morning paper where the announcement of the restoration of Tewksbury Minster led him to write the famous letter mentioned earlier. In all truth it is quite difficult to see how Morris did not “lament” the past as both his artistic and political contributions were completely imbued with the spirit of the middle ages or at least with his interpretations of what it may have been. Furthermore, if we are to admit for the sake of argument that Morris did not idealize the middle ages as times superior to his own in many ways, his very grim outlook on the Victorian period could hardly be denied. As we have mentioned earlier, Morris, much like Ruskin, could not dissociate art and the worker, more specifically the relationship between the conditions of the worker and the quality of art he produced. In the midst of the nineteenth century when mechanization and the division of labour had become commonplace as the most profitable modes of production, Morris could not help but be severely critical of what he saw in his contemporary world. On one occasion in speaking critically of his own times, he went as far as to speak of “the danger that the present course of civilization will destroy the beauty of life.”²⁰ He then proceeded to inform the audience that he had actually carefully weighed these words and still decided to utter them: “these are hard words, and I wish I could mend them, but I cannot, while I speak what I believe to be the truth.”²¹ Words such as these were obviously not spoken by someone who was enchanted by his own contemporary world. Although we have yet to prove that Morris thought the contemporary world to be beyond redemption, it is clear that he looked to the past in search of superior societal models. He often expressed his admiration of the medieval era as a source of inspiration for a future society.

The “heavy” outlook on things to come as it is expressed by Morris in the above mentioned quote is intimately related to the production of art, and,

²⁰ William Morris. “The Beauty of Life (1880)”. William Morris on Art and Socialism. Ed. Norman Kelvin. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1999. p.37

²¹ Ibid. p.37

more particularly, architecture. As it is a well known fact that Morris' interest in conservation came about almost simultaneously with his interest in socialism, making him an activist for both these ideologies at the same period in his life, which is quite detectable in his texts. As his great love and knowledge for the middle ages had existed from his very early years as a poet and medievalist, Morris' admiration for the old guild systems and high regard for what was then considered to be the "lesser arts" or crafts sometimes led him to rationalize everything in the name of art. In one of his speeches entitled "The Art of the People (1879)," Morris briefly touched upon the brutality of the times he so admired, yet still found a way to position art as a source of salvation amongst the misery: "Once men sat under grinding tyrannies, amidst violence and fear so great that nowadays we wonder how they lived through twenty-four hours of it, till we remember that then, as now, their daily labour was the main part of their lives, and that that daily labour was sweetened by the daily creation of Art."²² Morris would further develop on this subject by suggesting how things should be in light of the negative effects he saw in the modern manufacturing process, which unlike traditional artisan and craftsmanship, he understood as being useless. He once again speaks of the link between the happiness of the worker and the purpose he serves while creating art that is useful, which in Morris' opinion was the norm and situation before his time.²³ His analysis of modern manufacturing is quite clear on what he thought should remain and what should not in his contemporary setting:

As to the bricklayer, the mason, and the like-these would be artists, and doing not only necessary, but beautiful, and therefore happy work, if art were anything like what it should be. No, it is not such labour as this we need to do away with, but the toil which makes the thousand and one things which nobody wants."²⁴

²² William Morris. "The Art of the People (1879)". William Morris on Art and Socialism. Ed. Norman Kelvin. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1999. p.23

²³ Ibid. p.23-31

²⁴Ibid. p.31

Before we needlessly go further into Morris' more specific socialist ideas, it seems important to continue stressing the fact that Morris seemed to despise the present and favour the artistic and architectural production of the medieval past. While maintaining that the art of the past was meaningful because it was made for the people by the people, he did not shy away from denying that this was no longer the case in present times, regardless of the Victorian fascination and knowledge of medieval architecture:

So much is now known of the periods of art that have left abundant examples of their work behind them, that we can judge of the art of all periods by comparing these with the remains of times of which less has been left us; and we cannot fail to come to the conclusion that down to very recent days everything that the hand of man touched was more or less beautiful; so that in those days all people who made anything shared in art, as well as all people who used the things so made; that is, *all* people shared in art.²⁵

It seems negligible to emphasize that the preceding passage makes a strong statement about the superiority of art “down to very recent days.” It must be said that the general term of art that has been abundantly used by Morris in our examples thus far certainly includes architecture. Moreover, as can be imagined, Morris held a special affection and interest in architecture as it was, for him, the greatest and most apparent manifestation of man's artistic creation in civilization.

Through his writings and lectures, Morris constantly emphasized the fact that a small country home or modest parish church was equally if not more important than the grand monuments that many people constantly fussed over. As we can understand, this was perfectly in line with his views on art being created for the people and by the people. In this same line of thought, Morris did not fail to speak of domestic architecture as also exemplary of beauty from the past and ugliness of the present. In another one of his lectures

²⁵ William Morris. “The Beauty of Life (1880)”. William Morris on Art and Socialism. Ed. Norman Kelvin. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1999. p.31

entitled “The Prospects of Architecture in Civilization (1881),” Morris pondered the question as to why the common man could not be expected to understand how “towns whose houses are largely ancient, should be beautiful and romantic; all modern ones should be ugly and commonplace.”²⁶

Furthermore, he leaves no doubt as to the importance and centrality of architecture within his idea of the foundations of civilization in more ancient times, while once again expressing his hate for his times and his longing for the beauty of the past:

Therefore I will say that the contrast between past art and present, the universal beauty of men’s habitations as they were fashioned, and the universal ugliness of them as they are fashioned, is of the utmost import to civilization, and that it expresses much; it expresses no less than blind brutality which will destroy art at least, whatever else it may leave alive: art is not healthy, it even scarcely lives; it is on the wrong road, and if it follow that road will speedily meet its death on it.²⁷

The importance of architecture in William Morris’ whole world view, if we may be so bold, is largely defined by the didactic function it served. As a great lover of history especially that of the middle ages, we can conclude that he thought it essential to keep physical records of past times. Beyond the general appreciation for all things from the past, Morris also was a great connoisseur of the arts and probably saw it fit to protect and promote beautiful aesthetic elements issued from the periods preceding his. Furthermore, Morris was becoming a well known Marxist at the time of the founding of the SPAB, and much like Ruskin, often characterized architecture from the middle ages as superior to that of Victorian England in light of the apparent happiness of the workers which was unfortunately not in any way analogue to those of modern times. Finally, the didactic function that architecture was believed to

²⁶ William Morris. “The Prospects of Architecture in Civilization (1881)”. William Morris on Art and Socialism. Ed. Norman Kelvin. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1999. p.58

²⁷ Ibid. p.58

serve by providing an authentic artefact worthy of study was also appreciated as serving a certain nationalistic function. The disappearance of typically English medieval architecture was of great concern to Morris, as he thought it tragic for examples of work from the nation's greatest period to disappear for the coming generations to learn from them: "Such was the English art, whose history is in a sense at your doors, grown scarce indeed, and growing scarcer year by year, not only through greedy destruction, of which there is certainly less than there used to be, but also through the attacks of another foe, called nowadays 'restoration'." ²⁸

In Morris' opinion, the didactic function served by medieval buildings was in part enriched by the additions and renovations that had taken place during the centuries that followed the original construction. As Morris put it in the *Manifesto*, these subsequent alterations were mainly valuable in how whatever history they may have destroyed, they "left history in the gap." ²⁹ He added in his speech on the "Lesser Arts" that "these old buildings have been altered and added to century after century, often beautifully, always historically; their value, a great part of it lay in that." ³⁰ The great difference between this and restoration was pointed out by Morris on many occasions as the former being worthy of some sort of originality, whereas the latter was nothing more than a vulgar attempt to copy something that had already been done. Morris verbalized his contempt for this concept and its origin quite clearly when he said that:

But of late years a great uprising of ecclesiastical zeal, coinciding with a great increase of study, and consequently of knowledge of medieval architecture has driven people into spending their money on these buildings, not merely with the purpose of repairing them, of keeping them safe, clean, and

²⁸ William Morris. "The Lesser Arts (1877)". *William Morris on Art and Socialism*. Ed. Norman Kelvin. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1999. p.12

²⁹ William Morris. "Manifesto for the Protection of Ancient Buildings(1877)". *William Morris: On Architecture*. Ed. Christopher Miele. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.

³⁰ William Morris. "The Lesser Arts (1877)". *William Morris on Art and Socialism*. Ed. Norman Kelvin. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1999. p.12

wind and water-tight, but also of “restoring” them to some ideal state of perfection; sweeping away if possible all signs of what has befallen them at least since the Reformation, and often since dates much earlier.³¹

This idea of architects restoring buildings to some sort of “ideal state of perfection” was certainly one of the most powerful arguments discrediting restoration architects, as it forced them to justify their decisions. More often than not, they could not demonstrate in any credible manner how they came to rebuild a certain section or feature of a church in a certain style or fashion, other than the fact that they admired medieval aesthetics and learned to copy examples from existing buildings. It was their imagination, rarely fact, which informed the choices of design in a restoration project.

That this new passion and knowledge of medieval architecture animated both the destructive power of restoration and the conservation movement further emphasizes the irony of the situation. While Morris obviously encouraged the study of medieval architecture for all, he certainly thought it best to study it from “unrestored” originals. He was also quite conscious that the knowledge of and enthusiasm for the aesthetic led many professional architects to believe they were free to tamper with national monuments as they saw fit. The approach used in the manifesto of the SPAB was quite clear on this, as Miele points out: “Morris describes the Revival as an evil doctrine whose principal feature was a narrow system of historical knowledge empowering architects to say what was right and wrong with old buildings and then make the necessary corrections without any regard for what imperfections and peculiarities might show about past life.”³² The empowerment of the architects was not only derived from their “knowledge” but mostly from their association with the Anglican clergy and administration. The fact that the Church was the owner of the most impressive collection of

³¹ William Morris. “The Lesser Arts (1877)”. William Morris on Art and Socialism. Ed. Norman Kelvin. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1999. p.12

³² Christopher Miele. “The first conservation militants: William Morris and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.” Preserving the Past: The rise of Heritage in Modern Britain. Stroud, Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1996. p.22

medieval buildings in the United Kingdom is certainly one that is not negligible in light of our current discussion.

The very fact that the Anglican Church was such an important owner of what were arguably national monuments and decided to alter and rebuild these monuments in the pursuit of their own devices certainly was at the heart of Morris' motivation for creating the modern conservation movement through the founding of the SPAB. In the very earliest instances of the SPAB, before the manifesto was even written, Morris attacked the Anglican Church with all his passion and vocabulary. Morris' grumblings were often portrayed as opportunism for the forwarding of his socialist ideals. It is understandable how certain comments on his part may have been interpreted as such by his critics and biographers, for what he was suggesting on occasion could have been considered outright seditious within the context of his reality. As Miele mentioned, Morris claimed once claimed in an open letter to *The Times* that "I think our ancient historical monuments are national property and ought no longer to be left to the mercy of the many and variable ideas of the ecclesiastical propriety that may be prevalent among us."³³ Miele continues by pointing out that with this comment "private landownership was being challenged in principle by progressive thinkers at this time, so that his words would have borne associations of revolution and not merely secularism."³⁴ Whether Morris was challenging private landownership through his sincere desire to protect medieval architecture, through a desire to promote his socialist agenda, or through a combination of elements has yet to be proven beyond any doubt. We can say with much certainty that his views on the function and meaning of architecture were issued from his socio-political thought as much as they were from his aesthetic sensibility.

³³ Christopher Miele. "A Small Knot of Cultivated People: William Morris and Ideologies of Protection." *Art Journal*. vol.54, summer 1995, p.76

³⁴ *Ibid.* p.76

In attributing such great importance to the didactic function of architecture, Morris proved that he was lobbying for the protection of the nations ancient buildings for a number of reasons, especially as the embodiment of all he thought good and worthy of admiration in society. Although he explicitly mentions that certain monuments or works from periods other than the medieval were quite worthy of protection, Morris' exceptional love and knowledge of the middle ages put this specific period at the forefront of his concerns. Moreover, the Gothic Revival was the most important architectural current to have taken hold of English society in the Victorian era, and along with the impetus given to it by the Anglican Church in an attempt to increase its own popularity, it was inevitable that this specific style would come under attack following restorations. The fact that Morris challenged the right for the Church to own its own inventory of medieval churches was perfectly in line with his secular and socialist views and was also a direct challenge to the Church's plans for self promotion. It is therefore quite plausible to understand the founding of the SPAB as an act of resistance to the Anglican Church's fight for expansion. We can interpret the creation of Morris' *Society* as a direct reaction to the Anglican restoration projects and as a counter measure to the threat that a significant amount of authentic ecclesiastical architecture may be lost forever.

The Business of Restoration

“Architecture, that grandest of sciences, is fallen to a mere trade, and conducted not by artists, but by men of business.”³⁵

These words by H.R. Hitchcock quoting Pugin describe a situation that was reaching its zenith in the mid 1850's. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the once venerable profession of architect had sometimes come to be

³⁵ H.R. Hitchcock. Introduction. Contrasts. By A.W.N. Pugin. New York: Humanities Press, 1969. p.16

portrayed as a questionable practice, almost worthy of contempt. Although it may have been considered an unquestionably venerable profession prior to this, it had only been so for a short time; a few centuries at most. Caricaturists and satirists now poked fun at the architects who grew rich from the vast amount of lucrative commissions that became more and more common as the Anglican Revival's ideologically driven building program continued to gain momentum. This was especially true in the case of restorations which, as we will examine shortly, vastly outnumbered the quantity of new constructions that were commissioned in the mid and late nineteenth century. Where as Church building had once been considered a true and noble art conducted with emotional input and utmost intimacy between the building and its designer, the wealth and commercial concerns that came to surround the profession led many to consider them with a fair amount of cynicism. Although names like William Butterfield, G.E. Street and Sir Gilbert Scott may belong to a select group of the most brilliant architects of all time in the opinion of some, to many of their contemporaries they became symbolic of the sick and negative effects of capitalism. With the public's fervor for the Gothic aesthetic and the will of the Anglican Church to "Gothicize" its image, these professionals came to appreciate and make conscious efforts to maintain the steady flow of commissions. It can be said that this sort of situation inevitably led to certain decisions being made with profit as its main concern, rather than the protection of a nation's architectural treasure.

We can consider that the "nature" of the profession had not yet been completely defined. While in present times it has become of common acceptance that an architect is to be considered at once an artist and an engineer, the nineteenth century was the first to truly see the English architect add the title of businessman to his list of responsibilities. The time and place that is of interest to us here, in some ways also "ennobled" the practice as a gentleman's profession before the allegations of commercial interest overriding all others began to be more widespread. Although it certainly was

not new, the reconsideration of the popular understanding of architecture at this time of great interest for the middle ages was also significant and symbolic in many ways. While the greatest Gothic cathedrals of Europe had, for the most part, been the life's work of very talented master masons, it would appear that the occupation itself had been reduced to a mere trade by the Victorian era. Furthermore, most accounts describing the phases of design and planning of Gothic Cathedrals in the middle ages mention a fair amount of learning and modifying as the limits of the medium and materials were constantly being pushed further with every new construction project as it developed. In essence, the building of a Gothic Cathedral as it was to be understood by men like Ruskin and Morris was definitely a "non-static," fluctuating piece of work that gradually took on the distinctive character of the mason who would not only execute plans but also be part of the design scheme.

The advent of the architect in England as an authoritative voice and man of stature, whose final word was to be taken quite seriously, is closely related to the rise of classicism. With this phenomenon we saw figures such as Wren become celebrities in their day, as their built work was not their only contribution, but their theories and drawings also gained much attention. This most certainly contributed to the image of the architect as not only an artist but also a wise man of sorts. In a manner quite contrary to this, the famous names that saw the light of day in the Victorian era were greatly associated with the pursuits of business and commerce. This very fact can be understood as having further aggravated the situation for authentic medieval architecture in England at the time. While we attempt to understand that the Gothic Revival was the result of both romantic and religious pursuits hoping to achieve a certain ideal, by the middle of the nineteenth century it was clear that a new dimension had been dragged into the equation: profit.

The "system" to which professional architects were accused of adhering in order to line their pockets while destroying the nation's medieval

architecture can definitely be considered a vast subject in itself. While more recent scholarship by Christopher Miele has come to question the apparently overly simplistic understanding of the debate on the Victorian architect's role in restoration practices, the fact remains that to some of their contemporaries and later critics, the Church made funds available to an undeserving profession that then made unreasonable decisions destroying authentic medieval features. It is the whole system and process of church building, including its financing that was under fire in the Victorian era. Pugin expresses this idea in his characteristically passionate way:

I cannot conclude this part of my subject without making a few observations on the present system of church and chapel building—a system so vile, so mercenary, and so derogatory to the reverence and honor that should be paid to divine worship, that it is deserving of the severest censure; and I will say, that among the most grievous sins of the time, may be ranked those of trying for small a sum religious edifices can be erected, and how great a percentage can be made, for money advanced for their erection, by the rental of pews. It is a trafficking in sacred things that vastly resembles that profanation of the temple which drew such indignation from our Divine Redeemer, that, contrary to the mild forbearance he had ever before shown, he cast forth the polluters of holy place with scourges and stripes.³⁶

While we are greatly concerned with understanding the genesis of a modern architectural conservation movement as resulting from a confrontation between the ideals of Morris and a self-promoting Church of England, other important angles also need to be examined. By this we mean to shed light on the whole process of financing and funding to which Pugin was hinting, for it was also an integral part of the Restoration process. It would seem fair to say that the very lucrative commissions that came out of the great Anglican building campaigns also greatly contributed to Morris' anger at the whole situation in economic terms. This time we may speak of Morris the militant

³⁶ A.W.N. Pugin. Contrasts. New York: Humanities Press, 1969. p.48

socialist, facing off against the Church's system of construction bids and commissions. Yet the simple fact remains that Morris himself participated in the alleged "orgy" of restoration commissions handed out in the nineteenth century. It is a well known fact that his firm's stained glass found its way into a number of restored churches, making him and his partners quite wealthy in the process. As Miele points out:

The financial success of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co. had been assured by commissions for stained glass installed in churches built or restored by Scott, Street, Bodley and Garner. More Morris glass went into ancient churches than into modern ones through the mid-1870's. Morris only began to attack restoration after his firm's domestic product line was well established and profitable.³⁷

Although the irony here may be remarkable, it is only further troubling to learn the extents to which Morris participated in the enabling of what he would later denounce with much virulence. It would be impossible for Morris to claim that he was unaware of the cycle to which he participated, for as Miele put it: "It is no secret that church restoration and the Gothic Revival were tools of Anglican reform. The Church of England, by promoting church building and restoration, brokered a huge transfer of capital from the purses of church patrons to the purses of church architects."³⁸ Therefore we can suppose that he was at once critical of the Anglican Church and the conduct of professional architects at the time, while on the other hand benefiting quite handsomely from their supposed crimes against England's architectural treasures.

³⁷ Christopher Miele, "Their interest and habit: Professionalism and the Restoration of Medieval Churches, 1837-77". *The Victorian Church: Architecture and Society*. New York: Manchester University Press, 1995.p.152

³⁸ Christopher Miele, "Their interest and habit: Professionalism and the Restoration of Medieval Churches, 1837-77". *The Victorian Church: Architecture and Society*. New York: Manchester University Press, 1995.p.166

While we have had the occasion to review a number of scholarly sources depicting the inner workings of the Victorian Church, a detailed discussion of these elements are certainly not our primary concern here. Although it may be interesting to note that most accounts reveal practices that would be considered quite questionable according to today's standards, we cannot plunge into such matters without giving the subject the full attention that it requires. Regarding the ultimate purpose of our undertaking, it would seem sufficient to say that the methods and practices used in obtaining a parish or vicarage for example, as well as the influence peddling and predatory systems of taxation and acquisition of land were perfectly in line with the "customs" of the day in all areas, not more so in the Church. In very general terms, the vast majority of funds that were used to build, rebuild or restore churches in nineteenth century England came from the pockets of the Anglican flock. It is quite evident that some larger donors could occasionally be called upon to make a contribution for a specific project, but in the majority of situations, a parish collected funds on a regular basis in the manner in which it saw fit. Earlier in our text, a quote from Pugin expressed his disgust at the rental of pews as one specific practice. Such practices were not necessarily perceived as reprehensible by all Victorians. Moreover, as there was a hierarchy and centralized administrative bodies in the Anglican Church, it is quite evident that not all funds collected would necessarily stay within the parish where they were gathered.

We must not forget the involvement of Parliament in the structure of the Church, and by extension, in the care and rehabilitation of its buildings. As it is well known that the Anglican Church was and still is the official Church of the state and its sovereign, it seems only natural that the legislative arm of the government had some involvement in the most crucial and important matters concerning it. Yet by the early nineteenth century, it was clear that changes had to be made in order for the Church and its flock to feel like they, as well as Parliament, were working towards a common good. As both

Eastlake and Clark made clear in their critical accounts of the Gothic Revival, there were very few churches built in the late eighteenth and very early nineteenth century. On the surface level, the reasons for this can be interpreted as being related to our earlier discussion of the ground that had been gained by the “non-conformist” sects, as well as the dwindling amount of people attending Anglican Church services at the time. The words of Clark shed some light on the root causes, including the different situation in the urban setting:

But undoubtedly the chief reason why so few Gothic churches were built between 1760 and 1820 is that very few important churches of any kind were built during that period. In the middle ages the country had been overstocked with churches, and the increase in the rural population during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was not so great as to demand much new building. This is not true of the towns; London had been admittedly in want of churches at the very beginning of the eighteenth century, and fifty were to have been built there in Queen Anne’s reign.³⁹

Likewise, Eastlake’s comments on the reasons why no Churches were built at the time and makes it quite clear that it was a simple matter of attendance. While the geographical size of a parish, considering those in rural settings were very large, is explained to be inconsequential to the number of parishioners, Eastlake avoids venturing very far into the causes of the phenomenon: “A large parish does not always, and certainly did not in those days, mean a large congregation. In plain language, it would have been absurd to build new churches while the old ones remained half filled. How far the clergy, and how far the people themselves, were responsible for this state of things, it is difficult to estimate.”⁴⁰

By the opening decades of the nineteenth century, the demographic shift towards the country’s urban areas, coupled with a growing fervor in the

³⁹ Kenneth Clark. *The Gothic Revival*. London: John Murray, 1962. p.95

⁴⁰ Charles L. Eastlake. *A History of the Gothic Revival*. Ed. and Intro. J. Mordaunt Crook. New York: Humanities Press, 1970. p.116-117

Anglican faith made the need for new Churches or spaces of worship felt quite decisively. Characteristically, the Church's faithful members provided the initiative that would lead to the founding of a Church building society that would eventually be incorporated by an act of Parliament and secure state financial resources for new projects. Kenneth Clark elaborates on this defining moment: "In 1818 there appeared the Church Building Society, and the extraordinary success of this pious enterprise shamed the government into action. A bill was passed which granted a million pounds to be spent on building churches in populous districts, and from 1818 to 1833 it is calculated that at least six millions were spent on church building."⁴¹ He then continues and takes care in reminding us of the importance of the Gothic aesthetic in these new constructions: "Two hundred and fourteen churches were erected as a result of the Church Building Act (1818); and of these a hundred and seventy-four were in a style then described as Gothic, and which it is perhaps impossible to classify in any other manner."⁴² The importance of the year 1818, is not only so in relation to the act of parliament or the formation of the Church Building Society, but it is rather remarkable in how it marks the beginning of a renewal for the administrative body of the Anglican Church, for as G. Kitson Clark put it: "The machinery of the Church of England had not been recast since the Middle Ages."⁴³

In the very same text, Kitson Clark also points out that prior to 1818, the Anglican Church needed an act of Parliament to be passed in order to take care of its own business in the manner that it saw fit. This was certainly true regarding the creation of new parishes through the division of older ones. This was considered a necessary operation as the populations began to increase at this time in urban areas. Through new pieces of legislation and an increasingly active Anglican population, the Church managed to renew its outdated and inefficient structure, which also had the effect of initiating a greater number of

⁴¹ Kenneth Clark. The Gothic Revival. London: John Murray, 1962. p.95

⁴² Ibid. p.95-96

⁴³ G. Kitson Clark. The Making of Victorian England. London: Methuen, 1965. p.154

Church building projects. It then seems correct to say that 1818 also brought with it a new form of state financing that would set the tone for the rest of the century. Kitson Clark is quite clear and concise in his explanation of the impact that the events of this very important year brought with it:

In 1818 Parliament was persuaded to hand over 1,000,000£ over to the Church Commissioners to build churches in populous districts. This was the beginning of the flood of money to be poured into church building, at the same time some 200,000£ had been privately subscribed, and in 1824 Parliament was persuaded to add another 500,000£ to what they had already granted. Apart from the money it granted, the Act of 1818 is very important because it began that alteration of the law which facilitated the creation of new livings.⁴⁴

Furthermore, the impetus that these events provided for the Anglican Revival, as well as the Gothic Revival in architecture that followed, inevitably led to the considerable enrichment of the profession that made it its business to build or restore Anglican churches. As the Revival progressed into the second half of the nineteenth century and the number of new constructions dwindled in comparison to the number of restoration projects, it became quite evident that the architectural profession was firmly in control of this new wealth that sprang forth from the Church's desire for renewal. The fact of whether or not the architects themselves were directly responsible for encouraging the destruction of original medieval churches in the process of restoring them is still quite contentious. Their involvement was always in direct relation to that of the Church and it remains open to debate and interpretation as to their true intentions as a profession in what concerns the impact the Revival had on the nation's architecture. Although there is one element that remains constant: the active involvement of the Church in the unprecedented amount of restorations that took place in nineteenth century. As the rightful owners of the vast majority of the United Kingdom's inventory

⁴⁴Ibid., p.155-156

of medieval buildings, we can honestly suppose that the Anglican Church would never have proceeded with such a vast undertaking unless it had a serious reason to do so. The harsh criticism that was handed to the profession by men like Morris may not have been as credible and justified as originally thought. Although it must be mentioned that while he was critical of restoration architects, he was equally condemning of the Church concerning the same matters.

As it has already been suggested earlier, the subject of Morris' criticism of the Architectural establishment as one of the leading causes of the destruction of medieval churches is examined under a new light by Christopher Miele in his article entitled "Their interest and habit: Professionalism and the Restoration of Medieval Churches, 1837-77." While we could argue quite convincingly that much of the destruction that was brought upon the country's inventory of medieval churches is most widely understood as being caused by the greedy and careless architects of the time, Miele makes a very convincing argument challenging this notion. The author demonstrates through a series of examples that beginning in the 1840's, the architectural profession was much more concerned with the protection and conservation of the nation's medieval buildings than we could have originally thought. As a leading scholar on the subject of William Morris and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, Miele also sheds new light on Morris' denunciation and criticism of famous architects of the period. He explains:

Morris, who had close personal and professional contacts with the most advanced architects of the day including Bodley, Scott and Street, knew that restoration practice had changed since the

early days of the Revival, but he simply could not resist the rhetorical potency of the before-and-after view.⁴⁵

This idea that is brought forth by Miele is quite revolutionary in the sense that it directly challenges the popular, as well as traditional scholarly conception of William Morris as the great hero of Architectural Conservation. This idea of Morris as the faultless champion of an unpopular cause, who metaphorically swam against a tide of opposition carefully organized by his contemporaries, is simply not true when considering such credible arguments. There is further reason to adhere to this theory when considering that although Miele allows himself to criticize Morris in the article named above, in much of his other work he takes care of offering much praise for William Morris and the SPAB. While he is critical of some actions taken by Morris, Miele's article has the more noble intention of rectifying or rehabilitating the understanding of the role and relationships between the Church and professional architects during the construction "boom" that took place between 1840 and 1875. It would be too simplistic to say that history was simply blaming the wrong entity for the destruction of medieval churches. The facts seem to indicate that as early as the founding of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1834, professional architects were striving towards the establishment of higher standards and practices when dealing with heritage buildings. As Miele points out, architects, as well as a host of other "new" professionals at the time were greatly concerned with standardizing, regulating and regimenting their practices in order to gain greater respect, credibility and ultimately augment their social standing: "The professions sought to replace advancement by patronage with advancement by merit and called for recognized qualifications and systems of instruction. They tried to

⁴⁵ Christopher Miele, "Their interest and habit: Professionalism and the Restoration of Medieval Churches, 1837-77". *The Victorian Church: Architecture and Society*. New York: Manchester University Press, 1995.p.152

define areas of activity by spreading a body of knowledge codified in a specialist language.”⁴⁶

The involvement of the Church is also brought into question by Miele in this very same article. The once popular idea of the businessman architect making victims out of innocent, uninformed, incapable churchmen in the ruthless pursuit of profit with complete disregard for the state of authentic medieval architecture is simply refuted. As Miele points out: “Clergy were not sluggish and easy marks led astray by a greedy profession. Morris exaggerated the charges against architects, deliberately ignoring more than four decades of professional attempts to reform the practice of restoration.”⁴⁷ The arguments presented seem to be more in line with the aims and aspirations of our undertaking, suggesting a conscious and deliberate set of actions by the Church carrying out or commissioning careless restoration projects. In this article the Church is not so much being charged with having acted in malice, but Miele seems rather more concerned with condemning its amateurism. As Miele indicates, the increasing involvement of professional architects after 1834 should be considered a step forward, in contrast to what the typical process had been prior to this: “Before the formation of the RIBA in 1834, the care of ancient fabrics was not as a rule entrusted to architects but rather to local builders or craftsmen, usually instructed by the churchwarden.”⁴⁸

While Miele’s article entitled, “Their interest and habit: Professionalism and the Restoration of Medieval Churches, 1837-77,” does much to clear up or at least lessen the charges against architects as the principle “destroyers” of authentic medieval architecture in Victorian

⁴⁶ Christopher Miele, “Their interest and habit: Professionalism and the Restoration of Medieval Churches, 1837-77”. *The Victorian Church: Architecture and Society*. New York: Manchester University Press, 1995.p.154

⁴⁷ Ibid. p.154

⁴⁸ Christopher Miele, “Their interest and habit: Professionalism and the Restoration of Medieval Churches, 1837-77”. *The Victorian Church: Architecture and Society*. New York: Manchester University Press, 1995.p.152

England, we cannot underestimate the massive sums that were allocated to Church building and restoration in the nineteenth century. The High Anglican revival had a definitive effect and resulted in an unprecedented building program which inevitably made rich men out of many architects. The actual figures vary from one scholar to another, but the following commentary by Chris Brooks from the introduction to an anthology he edited entitled “The Victorian Church” gives us a very good idea of the tremendous proportions and unprecedented business opportunity for a growing profession:

The achievements of the church-building program that grew directly from the Anglican Revival of the 1830’s and 1840’s are impressive. Between 1835 and 1875 3,765 new or rebuilt Anglican churches were consecrated, 1,010 of them in the peak decade of the 1860’s; over the forty year period an average of 96 consecrations took place each year.⁴⁹

While also giving us an idea of the proportions involved, Miele further emphasizes the abundance of projects within the same period in his own article from the very same anthology: “More to the point, between 1840 and 1875 more than 7,000 medieval parish churches were restored, rebuilt or enlarged. This represented nearly 80 per cent of all old parish churches in England and Wales, and is more than double the number of new churches built over the same period.”⁵⁰ When considering these figures, we can realistically consider the situation of the nineteenth century English restoration architect as one that was greatly reflective of the capitalist ideal that was discussed earlier. It is without question a success story from the point of view of the new capitalist system that had grown to be the norm in this time period. With that being said, it is not our intention to question the right a nineteenth century professional may have had to actively pursue wealth and position, but rather to evaluate the real impact and implications all of this may

⁴⁹ Chris Brooks. Introduction. *The Victorian Church: Architecture and Society*. Ed. Chris Brooks and Andrew Saint. New York: Manchester University Press, 1995. p.9

⁵⁰ Christopher Miele, “Their interest and habit: Professionalism and the Restoration of Medieval Churches, 1837-77”. *The Victorian Church: Architecture and Society*. New York: Manchester University Press, 1995.p.156

have had on the nation's collection of medieval architecture. Moreover, the idea of placing blame on the architectural profession, rather than the Church or vice versa seems somewhat unsatisfying and inconclusive.

It can be said with great certainty that both the Anglican Church and the Architectural profession worked in concert to restore a huge number of medieval buildings to varying degrees in the period between 1840 and 1875. The question as to whether William Morris directed his anger towards one entity more than the other may not seem essential to our case, but it is quite important in establishing the true involvement of the Anglican Church. We can claim after reading Miele that there is significant evidence supporting the fact that Morris knowingly exaggerated claims against contemporary architects in order to increase the potency of his attacks on restorations. All of this seemingly contributed to perpetuating the idea that the Churchmen in charge of construction at their respective establishments were somehow innocent victims of greedy architects which had the capacity to dupe them. This does not however eclipse the fact that the Anglican Church would also be regarded with great contempt by Morris in his articles and speeches, although maybe in a less constant and aggressive manner. And it is our firm belief that the huge number of nineteenth century restorations would never have been carried out had the Church not been willing and active participants. Furthermore, the evidence reviewed on the subject would lead us to conclude that the great involvement of the architectural profession in the restoration movement actually helped save some authentic medieval buildings and features. These elements once compounded are definitely in line with the evidence required in bringing strength and evidence to the precepts of our undertaking.

Chapter 2 Looking Back to the Past

Medievalism in the Victorian Era

As we attempt to bring greater meaning to the revival of the Gothic aesthetic in Victorian England, as well as better understand the implications for and of William Morris and the Anglican Church, it would appear essential to provide some context to such an important and complex cultural phenomenon. While we seek to better understand the genesis of the modern architectural conservation movement, it would seem quite appropriate to first legitimize the very existence of the great Gothic Revival and explore the various elements that contributed to its appearance, be it directly or indirectly. Some, like Howard Colvin,⁵¹ explore the idea of “Gothick” survival as opposed to Gothic Revival, and that in architecture at least the Gothic aesthetic never really ceased to be used in English architecture. Denying the fact that a distinct literary, artistic and cultural movement reviving the aesthetics of the Christian middle ages first gained prominence in late seventeenth century England, and in some ways defined the Victorian period, is somewhat difficult to admit. It would therefore seem appropriate to provide a brief picture of Victorian society regarding the matters at hand, as well as a preliminary exploration of the characters and organizations that are essential to achieving the main objectives of this research.

Although William Morris is often considered to be a great artist, poet, visionary and founder of a movement that has lasted unto this day, his identity as a “medievalist” was certainly not what truly differentiated him from his contemporaries in the Victorian era. A very significant characteristic that contributes to our understanding of the Victorian period is the fact that by the

⁵¹ Howard Colvin. Gothic Survival and Gothick Revival in: “Essays in English Architectural History”. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999. p.217-243

late eighteenth century a veritable “obsession” for the middle ages had taken root in England and would continue to grow well into the following century. This overwhelming interest and passion for the middle ages was present in numerous areas of existence, most notably in those concerned with artistic or cultural production. The paramount or most symbolic example in England for a significant resurgence of a medieval aesthetic in the common psyche would probably be the novels of Sir Walter Scott, whose works such as *Ivanhoe*, gained widespread popularity in the first half of the nineteenth century. His tales set in the middle ages, with their summary descriptions of dress, architecture, pastimes and activities of the period profoundly marked the imaginary of his fellow citizens. Earlier examples of “gothic” fiction had, from the later eighteenth century, become a very popular genre which made household names of Horace Walpole, Anne Radcliff, and Mary Shelley. While this style of literature owed more to its use of supernatural phenomenon and the desire to call upon the sublime to move its readers, the mood that these novels set was perfectly in line with the various elements that would later converge in creating fertile conditions for the Revival. The name of Walpole is particularly interesting for he went on to build one of the most cited examples of early Gothic Revival architecture with his Strawberry Hill villa, considered by many to be the starting point of the Revival in Architecture.

As Kenneth Clark points out, the importance of the Strawberry Hill commission cannot be underestimated, for it is quite characteristic of the early phases of the Gothic Revival. This was a period where wealthy gentlemen set the tone for a “new” architectural aesthetic. This passion for the medieval aesthetic, demonstrated mostly by literary figures, was to fuel a very significant change in popular taste for architecture. This of course was quite unusual in the establishment of styles, fads, and fashions:

In most changes of taste the artist dictates to the public; but in its early stages the Gothic Revival was uninfluenced by

architects. Literary men with no particular architectural bent had started a demand for Gothic which was largely satisfied by amateurs. When professional architects employed the style, they did so purely at the dictates of their patrons.⁵²

The important impact and involvement of literature and literary men cannot be underestimated when discussing the causes, origins, and manifestations of Medievalism and the Gothic Revival. It was with the Romantic movement in literature that we first saw manifested such a great passion and adoration for the medieval period; the writings of Keats, Coleridge and Byron are most often cited as prime examples, although some may reach back to Blake in these matters. The early writings of Morris himself, most notably his first real success with *The Defence of Guenevere and other Poems* of 1858, are seen by most as being thoroughly imbued with the spirit and aesthetic of Keats and of others while revealing their own originality in the process. Thompson points out the sources that moved Morris and influenced his writing:

If the master influence is that of Keats, two more immediate influences can be felt in the poems—the sensuous lyricism of Tennyson, the rough vigor of early Browning. But, while many poems in the volume are directly derivative from these two poets, and others are little more than bizarre “medieval” experiments, the best among them are entirely original, in the sense that Morris has thoroughly absorbed the influence of his fore runners, and achieved a synthesis of his own (...) They are, indeed, among the last true and uncorrupted works of the Romantic Revolt.⁵³

This last sentence emphasizes the fact that by the time Morris was coming of age at Oxford, the Romantic movement or “Revolt” in literature was “already in its autumn,”⁵⁴ as Thompson also takes care of mentioning . Although this may have been the case, Romanticism served as a stepping

⁵² Kenneth Clark. *The Gothic Revival*. London: John Murray, 1962. p.80

⁵³ E.P. Thompson. *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*. Revised edition, London: Merlin Press, 1977. p.77-78

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p.78

stone for the type of medievalism that Morris and some of his contemporaries would join, defend, and champion. The escapist nature of Romanticism, with its quest to find beauty in values of heroism and chivalry imagined in the past, was mirrored by the same instinct in Victorian medievalists. Being chronologically and geographically linked, it is obvious that the grievances were also similar; both movements and cultural occurrences were born of a clear dissatisfaction with the conditions of present times. The effects of industrialization on the physical world, as well as the effects of capitalism and the rising middle class were seen as negative by anyone who seemed to care about such things. Furthermore, the similarities between Romanticism and Medievalism do not necessarily continue into the heart of the matter; where Romanticism searched for happiness in nostalgia with a somewhat defeatist attitude, Morris' brand of medievalism looked to the past in the hope of finding a realistic model for the present and future. Thompson explains this less militant slant in Romanticism:

The Romantic Movement was escapist to a world of "romance," in compensation for the poverty of life, where beauty, the energies of youth, love, and heroism, were conjured up in ancient heroic or medieval chivalric settings, or by frequent allusions to the culture of the past, or by hypnotic and sensuous incantation. But always in this dream-world these values are evoked with a savor of nostalgia, of loss, of the unattainable.⁵⁵

Morris' fascination with the middle ages was not only aesthetic or nostalgic, but political, economical and cultural. He could wish to see many aspects of medieval life in England resurfacing in the great struggle to reform society. He idealized this period in its capacity to provide a new model to be followed in his "holy war" against the Victorian age. While we have already mentioned his denial of idealizing the past at the expense of the present and future, it is clear that William Morris gave his interpretation of the middle ages a central role in his utopian visions of the years ahead.

⁵⁵ E.P. Thompson. William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary. Revised edition, London: Merlin Press, 1977. p.78

One of the most defining characteristics of medievalism was the simple fact that it was a manifestation of the rehabilitation of the historical period in the eyes of most educated people. The “new history,” as it is called in Margaret R. Grennan’s biography of William Morris, was at once a bi-product of a literary movement as mentioned earlier, but also found enthusiasts in a variety of areas, as Morris himself realized:

With his acute awareness of the inner springs of action working beneath the “rare show” of the Victorian present, he arrived at the conclusion modern scholarship has since confirmed—that this “gift of the epoch,” the new history, arose with the romantic impulse in literature and was intimately related to it. He saw this concern with times past, begun in the era of Scott, deepen with the movements that drew from it their own life: the Anglo-Catholic revival in religion, the Gothic in art, the Pre-Raphaelite in poetry and painting.⁵⁶

Morris watched with delight as his contemporaries questioned and rejected the traditionally negative vision of the period, “an attitude that involved the final rejection of the idea of the medieval as an era of accidental confusion between two periods of order, classical and modern.”⁵⁷ With his dislike of modern times and industrialization being quite evident, his very positive perception of the medieval period gained importance as his greatest source of inspiration for all his undertakings. The fact that common knowledge and opinion shifted positively during the Victorian era was certainly welcome by Morris for fundamental reasons, as Grennan points out: “justice done to the middle ages was particularly welcome since at the root of his beliefs was the conviction that those times must be revaluated and their contributions preserved if men were not to lose, under the illusion of progress, traditions of lasting worth”⁵⁸. Here Morris is connected to the concept of conservation and it must be pointed out that all aspects of medieval life interested Morris as he was well versed in them himself. From the literary and artistic production of the times,

⁵⁶ Margaret R. Grennan. William Morris: Medievalist and Revolutionary. New York: King’s Crown Press, 1945. p.51

⁵⁷ Ibid. p.51

⁵⁸ Ibid. p.52

to the political and labor relations which could be found in England close to a thousand years before his time, the first for which Morris had a particular affection earlier in his life and a passionate interest for the latter when he devoted himself to socialism in his later years.

Another aspect that is central to Morris' brand of medievalism and also what made it most powerful and influential amongst others is his adherence and use of the principles laid out by John Ruskin. We are not claiming here that the influence of the great writer and critic was in some way exclusive to Morris. It is quite well known that Ruskin's status as a giant of the Victorian era is supported by the idea that he cast a long shadow over the whole period and had an impact on his contemporaries that would be quite difficult for others to match. We seek only to point out or establish that Morris was, in some ways, an heir to Ruskin. We may consider that he actually set Ruskin's theories into practice. When regarding architecture, sculpture, or any sort of masonry work from the favored period, Morris echoes the words found in Ruskin's chapter "The Nature of Gothic" by linking the quality of the work to the conditions of the worker producing it. Although many concentrate on the obvious link between the principles laid out by Ruskin and the socialist ideas Morris was to later defend in the last decades of his life, Ruskin's influence lends more to Morris the Romantic and not the Revolutionary. It is well documented that in his time at Oxford, along with his friend Burne-Jones, Morris was exposed to Ruskin in a way that can only be described as revelation.

The discovery of such a great writer and inspired art theorist had an undeniable impact on the young William Morris. Ruskin's defense and support of Turner and of the Pre-Raphaelites, a group to whom certain members played an integral part in Morris' life, gave him the confidence that Ruskin had the capacity and desire to change conservative perceptions in art. But it was in Ruskin's *Seven Lamps of Architecture* that Morris discovered the most coherent and complete set of architectural principles based on aesthetic,

moral, and social grounds, ideas with which he could not agree more. The final work that Morris was to carry with him to the end was *The Stones of Venice*, and more specifically the chapter entitled “The Nature of Gothic,” as mentioned earlier. In this definitive work, enthusiasts of medievalism were provided with a strong argument promoting the aesthetic superiority of an architectural style and the society that produced it. We can believe that in this work, Morris found a theoretical basis for the brand of socialism he would later develop. Furthermore, to those who were willing to read into it in such a way, it offered a clear warning to the British Empire and those who thought it to be indestructible. As it had been with the doges of medieval Venice, the arrogance of the British aristocracy, and industrialists on the international stage was to one day be the cause of their downfall.

Although Morris’ respect and admiration for Ruskin was great, it gradually dimmed as the nineteenth century drew closer to its end, when Morris became less preoccupied with a passive brand of medievalism and was rather more interested in a militant form of socialist activism. The relative lack of enthusiasm Ruskin had regarding Morris’ architectural conservation initiatives such as the saving of San Marco in Venice, or his reluctance in formally joining the SPAB were highly indicative. There was a definitive break between the positions of both men when Morris set out to take more decisive action as a socialist in the early 1880’s. Thompson describes Morris’ break with “passive” medievalism quite well:

Here, indeed he might have remained, had his work for Anti-Scrape, his lectures and practice of the arts been his only line of advance. However revolutionary his theoretical insight into the problems that most concerned him, he was likely to fall into hopelessness or nostalgia if he did not have practical confidence in the possibility of overthrowing capitalism, practical contact with the working class. This was the point at which Morris broke so decisively with both Ruskin and

Arnold: “To do nothing but grumble and not act—that is throwing away one’s life.”⁵⁹

The paintings of Rossetti, Millais, and Hunt, as well as Morris’ own success designing fabrics, furniture, and “objets d’art,” are all testaments to the very fashionable nature of medievalism in the Victorian era. Morris himself was quite aware of this well established interest in medieval history, aesthetics, and customs amongst his contemporaries, and, though the origins of this rebirth are more easily identifiable to us now with hindsight, it may certainly not have been the case for himself and his contemporaries. When Margaret Grennan points to a question like: What were the Victorians searching for within their obsession with the middle ages?⁶⁰ it reveals a great deal of uncertainty regarding the cause and purpose of the Revival. While it was a very general and popular current, only the most vocal and prolific figures of the time have left enough behind for us to try and understand. Examining Morris’ fight when initiating the modern architectural conservation movement certainly is a great source of answers to this question.

In the realm of arts and crafts, the medievalism of the nineteenth century was unique in its glorification of the ordinary. As many modern artistic movements contemporary to it or that would follow, it released itself from the self-imposed obligation of striving to imitate nature and its forms perfectly through geometry and perspective. It rather put the emphasis on the artists and craftsmen producing the work and inevitably investigated the conditions under which they created and executed. This admiration and interest for “subjectivity” was definitely something new and it is not surprising that Ruskin’s defense of the hazy and dreamlike quality of works by Turner or the Pre-Raphaelites was applauded by Morris. Less importantly

⁵⁹ E.P. Thompson. William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary. Revised edition, London: Merlin Press, 1977. p.258

⁶⁰ Margaret R. Grennan. William Morris: Medievalist and Revolutionary. New York: King’s Crown Press, 1945. p.4

regarding the specifics of this paper, yet quite important in understanding the greater impact of Victorian Medievalism, it must be pointed out that it had the direct effect of raising the status of the decorative arts to a much higher plain. The work Morris carried out through his firm named *Morris & Co.* at the height of its popularity not only became the driving force behind the now well known Arts & Crafts movement, but it also helped revive techniques and processes that were quickly vanishing or had already fallen prey to the negative effects of mass manufacturing. Morris worked tirelessly to research and reintroduce the historically correct and proper techniques used by medieval tanners, craftsmen, upholsterers, and cabinet makers. Ironically, it is this new and important fact that made his firm's textiles and furniture unavailable to anyone other than the wealthy upper classes. Whether he liked it or not, it is well known that this champion of the common people had the very social class he despised doing much of the patronage for his work. The irony did not stop there as low quality, mass produced copies of his very fashionable work were bought by the lower classes who also took part in the craze.

As an undeniable marker of the medievalism we are referring to in this section, the rebuilding or restoration of Gothic buildings had the important impact of forcing learned men and women to ask themselves questions on the subject for the first time. There was quite a contrast with the neo-classical movement, which could not really have reeked havoc on surviving examples of authentic classical architecture for the very simple reasons that there were not many left after close to two thousand years of destruction and pillaging. We can also claim that the style had resurfaced mostly in western European countries which had seen a limited amount of permanent constructions built on their territories in the correct style during the classical period of Antiquity. The advent of the Neo-Gothic movement on the contrary led to the destructive practices of "restoration" and reconstruction which in turn gave birth to the modern architectural conservation movement. When Morris founded the

Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in 1877, it was a call to arms against what he thought were despicable practices which contributed to the disappearance of countless authentic examples of medieval architecture. It must be clear that Morris was not somehow very suddenly disenchanted with the medievalism he himself had once championed. He was rather railing against the foolish practice of destroying authentic work to replace it with a copy or imitation in order to increase its “Gothicness.” It would seem as though to many, the resurgence and popularization of a medieval aesthetic had nothing to do with the preservation of authentic examples from the period but simply a fashion like any other. As we will examine in the following section, there are many potential reasons behind the resurgence of the medieval style in architecture in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, but in the end most were likely related to some form of political or religious motivation. We will attempt to establish that the advent of the Gothic Revival in the popular mind has more to do with the social and religious situation in early nineteenth century England than with the legacy of Romantic poets and artists. This is most true when regarding architecture.

The Gothic Revival

The Gothic always stood for ideas larger than itself. The eighteenth century admired it for its suggestive quality of decay and melancholy, the early nineteenth for the religious piety it expressed, the late nineteenth for its superb engineering. In the course of the revival the Gothic was attached to social movements of every sort from political liberalism to patriotic nationalism, from Roman Catholic solidarity to labor reform. Like Marxism, which also drew lessons from medieval society, the Gothic revival offered a comprehensive response to the dislocations and traumas of the Industrial Revolution.⁶¹

⁶¹ Michael J. Lewis. The Gothic Revival. New York: Thames and Hudson, 2002. p.7

The historicism which manifested itself in the poetry, prose, and visual arts of the British Romantics and their direct descendants also came to life in the nation's architecture. During the first half of the nineteenth century, it was clear that the dominant aesthetic for Ecclesiastical architecture would be that of the High Gothic style, as copied or imagined by the architects of the day. As will be examined here, this renewed fervor for the Gothic style was the result of numerous factors converging onto a specific time and place. The impact on the physical architecture of a nation was undeniable. The fascination with the Gothic aesthetic not only brings to light evidence that Morris, the Anglican Church, and the "establishment" in general held a passionate interest for this aesthetic and by extension its history, but that the common man also joined in this idealization of the middle ages.

While the numerous factors, elements, and influences that contributed to the appearance of what quickly became known as the Gothic Revival are still subject to scrutiny and debate by academics, there are certain areas where consensus can be found. For the purposes of this research we shall concentrate on these in our attempt to present a most objective and general account of the various elements of which the revival was composed. In Michael J. Lewis' general outline and explanation of the revival entitled *The Gothic Revival*, he quite appropriately titles three of the opening chapters: Romanticism, Nationalism, and Truth. This attempt to divide the origins and phases of the revival into three simple concepts is quite correct and difficult to refute when considering other histories of the revival. Although the first two concepts of Romanticism and Nationalism are easily understood, the more esoteric sounding title of "Truth" refers to both the archeological and religious implications that would define the middle and later phases of the architectural revival. As with the medievalism discussed earlier, the debt to the Romantic movement is quite difficult to deny. The aesthetic value of a small parish church in the Gothic style set atop a modest cliff above a daintily wooded meadow in a flawless bucolic scene became a sort of cliché which has graced

many postcards in our era and found its way into a number of English paintings from the late eighteenth century on. It is difficult to pinpoint the precise time and place where a certain aesthetic creeps into the collective unconscious as the fashionable or most valued style of the day, nor is this the great concern of this research. But the use of the Gothic church by the Romantics, most notably those of the pastoral English countryside, was very effective in establishing the basic notions of the Gothic Revival to a wider audience. It seems important to point out that complementary to the rural parish church scenes referred to above, the popularity and depiction of monastic ruins, such as those by Casper David Friedrich, were highly representative of the literal and symbolic implications in establishing the vocabulary for the Gothic Revival. In these we revisited witnesses of the great loss of the medieval world in the now overwhelmingly protestant countries of northern Europe and England. By this we not only refer to the English monastic life that was doomed under Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell, but also to a sort of nostalgia for the Roman Catholic Church whose disappearance from England under the same regime also marked the definitive end of a continuity between the middle ages and the present.

The early stages of the Gothic Revival, which are most directly related to Romanticism, were by no means comparable to the rise in both interest and expertise that occurred in the nineteenth century concerning Gothic Architecture. Although its popularity was growing rapidly, the Romantic phase was still in effect and it had not yet stepped over into the phase of “Truth” as Lewis remarks:

By the end of the eighteenth century, the Gothic had progressed a long way toward rehabilitation. It was now an essential part of the architect's repertoire, an indispensable mode for lighter commissions. Nonetheless, the rehabilitation was only partial. There was still only the most imperfect understanding of real Gothic architecture; it had yet to be attached to more serious cultural ideas than affections of melancholy and gloom. While it was handy for country houses

or inherently gloomy objects like prisons, it was not yet fit for the most important civic commissions. In short, the Gothic had still not gathered the irresistible cultural momentum that a true revival requires. This would happen only with the twin forces of Romanticism and the Industrial Revolution, which liberated the Gothic from the quarantine of the picturesque garden and placed it in the centre of public life.⁶²

As touched upon earlier, the Revival first manifested itself in physical architecture by showcasing obvious elements of Gothic architecture, like pointed arches and turrets in private residences commissioned by wealthy noblemen and merchants. The beginnings of the Gothic Revival thus seem much less remarkable and significant in terms of social and religious impact. It was a mere matter of time before more serious implications began to appear in relation to the use of this architectural aesthetic. While the concerns with accuracy or authenticity of style and construction were slowly beginning to be addressed, more volatile and intimate aspects were also emerging as Lewis points out: “By 1800 most of the elements of the mature Gothic Revival were already in place in England. Substantial and handsome buildings were being built, informed by ever more accurate archaeology, and there was a growing tendency to link the style with medieval piety and Christianity.”⁶³

Before proceeding any further in this particular direction, it would seem essential to mention the work of Charles L. Eastlake, who wrote the first history of the Gothic Revival in 1872. As the Revival was still very much in effect while the work was being written, the author provides an extremely important account of the “craze” from contemporary, first hand experiences. Eastlake’s study of the Gothic Revival was the only significant one published until Kenneth Clark’s book in 1928. The proximity of the author to the major causes and influences, as well as the major reactions and issues of the day in relation to the Gothic Revival is certainly worthy of consideration. In the introduction to its 1970 edition, J. Mordaunt Crook outlines a division of the

⁶² Michael J. Lewis. The Gothic Revival. New York: Thames and Hudson, 2002. p.35

⁶³ Ibid. p.59

Revival into two distinct phases: the Romantic and the Archeological, with the year 1845 separating the two. As these titles are fairly self explanatory, it seems worth mentioning the resemblance to Lewis' outline above, but also to Clark's classification: "the Gothic Revival divides itself very clearly into two periods. The first of these we may call the picturesque period (...) the second we may call the Ethical period."⁶⁴ According to Crook's system, the Romantic phase is further divided into two parts: the Rococo Gothick and the Picturesque Gothick. The alternate spelling serves to highlight the coarse, "caricaturesque" or illegitimate quality of architecture from the first phase of the Revival.

These "sections" of the Romantic phase make reference to the more artificial or unsophisticated beginnings of the Revival, where authenticity was certainly not a necessary achievement and most, if not all architectural examples from this phase are private residences and the physical incarnation wealthy men's fantasies. The primary examples would be Walpole's Strawberry Hill and Beckford's Fonthill abbey. This element of fantasy is perfectly in line with the meaning and idea behind a revival, especially one which sprung forth from the Romantic Movement, as Crook points out: "Romanticism idealizes the remote; it glorifies the distant, both in time and place. All revivals are romantic and the Gothic Revival quintessentially so."⁶⁵ While a general understanding of what is meant by "romantic" in this context is somewhat expected, the differences between the Rococo and the Picturesque "Gothick" in Crook's system are best expressed by he himself:

The Rococo was principally expressed in decoration, the Picturesque in composition. The origins of Rococo Gothick were at least partly literary, the origins of the Picturesque were pictorial. But whereas the Rococo was a Continental exotic, imported and absorbed, the Picturesque was a visual philosophy of entirely native origins. Each contained

⁶⁴ Kenneth Clark. The Gothic Revival. London: John Murray, 1962. p.120

⁶⁵ Crook J. Mordaunt. Introduction. A History of the Gothic Revival. By Charles L. Eastlake, New York: Humanities Press, 1970. p.35

something of the other, and together they constitute the first two major phases of the Gothic Revival in this country.⁶⁶

The use of the word Rococo may be interpreted by some as a pejorative designation in this context and with good reason. This early phase of the revival was certainly not its most distinguished in both quality and originality of work. It has also come to be recognized as a sort of “kitsch” period in the revival, where the passion and desire for medieval architecture was definitely present but where the true understanding and appreciation of the style was definitely lacking. Although this may be the case, it was a necessary step in the development of a Revival that would eventually last more than one hundred years. The so called Rococo and Picturesque phases not only laid the foundations for more serious archeological and stylistic research of the genuine Gothic architecture that would appear in the nineteenth century, they also served to fuel high society’s penchant for a new change in taste. The well known Horace Walpole and the “Gothicizing” program of his Strawberry Hill residence, which was mentioned earlier, had a great effect on the advancement and credibility of the style. It not only reflected his personal taste, but contributed to the creation of a new generation of architects that would push further in the desire to correctly execute the style. The late eighteenth century saw the rise of Gothic from a marginal, almost laughable distraction to a serious change in taste. The enthusiasm and implication of a man of quality, such as Walpole, made a great difference in how the new aesthetic was viewed and accepted, as Clark clearly explains:

By that time the taste for Gothic had spread from a few eccentrics to the mass of fashionable country gentlemen. Walpole, as the unconscious instrument of Romanticism, was largely responsible for this diffusion it can be called, for he did not so much popularize as aristocratise Gothic. In 1750 the taste for pinnacles was associated with parvenus and

⁶⁶ Crook J. Mordaunt. Introduction. A History of the Gothic Revival. By Charles L. Eastlake, New York: Humanities Press, 1970. p.35

Chesterfield could dismiss it as such, but when the exquisite, cultivated Walpole took up Gothic, society began to feel that there might be something in it.⁶⁷

While attempting to fully understand the scope of the Revival from its sources to its impact and legacy, it seems clear that the increasing interest in associating the Gothic aesthetic to social and religious ideology was also mirrored by the rigor that could be found in concerns with stylistic correctness. Before moving on to these concerns which are central to this research project, we wish to emphasize the impressive amount of thought, work, and debate that from the early nineteenth century went into the study and refinement of reviving a truly credible and stylistically correct Gothic architecture. The phase of “Archeological Gothic” as outlined by Crook in his introduction to Eastlake’s book, sought to “dig up” the most genuine and authentic looking designs for Gothic Revival buildings. While at first this practice was mainly concerned with adding or introducing Gothic elements through decorative means, it soon grew to the ultimate goal of achieving a structurally authentic Gothic building. This development was truly fundamental as Clark emphasizes: “This scholarly interest in archaeology, followed by a sentimental delight in decay, is the true source of the Revival; and it just overlaps with the use of Gothic as a traditional style.”⁶⁸ Although we may consider this greater interest in pursuing truth in style, construction, and execution as a step forward, we cannot forget the fact that it is in this phase of the Gothic Revival that we begin to hear of Church restorations. While the exact degree to which this practice would be destructive to the nation’s stock of medieval buildings is still subject to much discussion, the fact that some great buildings or elements were lost cannot be disputed.

⁶⁷ Kenneth Clark. The Gothic Revival. London: John Murray, 1962. p.62

⁶⁸ Ibid. p.11

According to almost all accounts read on the Gothic Revival, it is the name of the architect James Wyatt which first revealed itself as synonymous with evil. Famously dubbed Wyatt the “destroyer” by Pugin, it is well known that his contemporaries, or those nearly so, were quite harsh in judging the man. He began his career as a classical architect with a good reputation and inevitably came to benefit from patronage demanding the execution of a Gothic style. As an architect active in the late eighteenth and very early nineteenth centuries this was inevitable. His most famous work was probably the design and construction of Fonthill abbey for William Beckford, which was a prime example of picturesque Gothic commissioned by an eccentric millionaire. The fact that Wyatt’s first “Gothic” works, as well as some later works were confined to private homes was perfectly in line with the developments of the Gothic Revival until then, as explained by Clark:

If we take a period extending to 1820, the proportion of new Gothic churches to Gothic Mansions and villas would be very small indeed. There are many obvious reasons why the Gothic style is more suited to churches than to any other branch of architecture; and anyone who has thought of the matter must have been surprised to find that until 1820 the Revival was practically confined to private houses.⁶⁹

The irony that is referred to here is not completely without explanation or reason. As we have seen earlier, the opening “Romantic” phase of the Gothic Revival was initiated by a select group of enthusiastic and wealthy gentlemen who saw it fit to reintroduce a style that moved them emotionally. As Eastlake put it so colorfully about this fact: “the revived taste for Medieval Architecture was as yet caviar to the multitude.”⁷⁰ The talents of Wyatt served their purposes quite well, as his outlook and abilities were perfectly in line with his patrons’ desires and the defining characteristics of the picturesque phase of the Revival: “Wyatt was an essentially romantic architect. His

⁶⁹ Kenneth Clark. *The Gothic Revival*. London: John Murray, 1962. p.93

⁷⁰ Charles L. Eastlake. *A History of the Gothic Revival*. Ed. and Intro. J. Mordaunt Crook. New York: Humanities Press, 1970. p.116

strength lay in scenic effect rather than in detail.”⁷¹ It is his move into ecclesiastical architecture, most notably that of restoration which led many to question his judgment and moved others to begin thinking about architectural conservation and the protection of medieval buildings.

Wyatt’s restoration work on Salisbury, Durham and Hereford Cathedrals, as well as that which was carried out on Westminster Abbey drew heavy criticism and left Wyatt’s reputation in the hands of his enemies, leaving the task of redeeming it to later biographers and historians. The destruction of certain features during restoration projects, such as screens and altars, are what particularly offended those who followed. This is particularly significant for it relates directly to the religious implications that will be discussed in the following sections. Meanwhile, if we are to use the work of Wyatt as a transition marker between two distinct phases of Gothic Revival architecture, it is without a doubt the one between the picturesque and the archeological or “ethical”. A new generation of architects would take the revival one step forward in an attempt to increase concerns with authenticity and stylistic correctness. While this did not inhibit the further “destruction” of medieval churches through restoration, it did in fact pull an increasing number of Ecclesiastical and civil building commissions towards the Gothic aesthetic. The quality of the work was ensured by the passionate research and scrutiny of architects seeking out authentic examples to copy.

While Morris would later be critical of those architects he called “copyists”, at least the architectural “Shams” of the mid to late eighteenth century were no longer an integral part of English architecture. The earlier romantic phases of the Revival identified above as the Rococco Gothick and Picturesque Gothick witnessed the construction of draw bridges that could not be raised, artificial ruins newly built to look as if they had been subjected to five hundred years of decay, and castle keeps that were neither structurally adequate or useful for the purposes of war. The subsequent phases of the

⁷¹ Kenneth Clark. The Gothic Revival. London: John Murray, 1962. p.83

Gothic Revival that are considered as “archeological” sought to redress the use of the aesthetic with useful and functional designs, as well as authenticity and historical accuracy. Some may suspect that the practice of copying medieval examples to integrate into contemporary buildings sacrificed originality in a whole generation of architects, but in the opinion of others, it may have had a positive effect, as Lewis points out:

In the 1840’s, the ideal of making a building that could not be distinguished from genuine Gothic architecture exercised an irresistible attraction over the minds of young architects. Presenting them with a clearly defined goal, it gave urgency and direction to their architectural studies, and acted as a healthy tonic on the whole Gothic Revival movement. It certainly cannot be said to have destroyed anyone’s powers of imagination for out of the ranks of the most successful copyists later emerged the revival’s most original architects, such as Butterfield and Street.⁷²

While Lewis touches upon a very important point, the copying that was increasingly carried out by architects in the first half of the nineteenth century was not only due to their own personal passion and motivations, but many outside factors contributed to this shift in practice. As will be examined in more detail, a number of popular figures and architectural, academic, or antiquarian societies gradually gained much importance in the decades leading up to the 1840’s. These societies would put an immense amount of pressure on architects and church officials alike in their desire to standardize and establish the Gothic “Decorated” style as the exclusive and official style of Christian architecture. The reasons were aesthetic, symbolic, nationalistic, but mostly linked to the return of religious ritual. This fact comes to contradict or even oppose Lewis’ idea that originality was still possible after the 1840’s with good reason. The powerful Cambridge Camden Society, which was to become the Ecclesiological Society in 1845, put tremendous pressure on all

⁷² Michael J. Lewis. The Gothic Revival. New York: Thames and Hudson, 2002. p.105

those with power of decision over the construction or restoration of English Churches. They were very effective in establishing their version of the “truth”, and having people accept it as gospel on the matters of architectural taste. The result was almost authoritarian as Clark points out: “After 1845 Gothic architecture was revived with a religious severity of purpose; and the architect who adopted that style worked under one of the most rigorous systems of taboo that have ever oppressed the inventive spirit.”⁷³ The “purpose” he refers to is what we will seek to outline in the following section, as it directly contributes to our undertaking of establishing the true involvement of the “Church” in the Gothic Revival and by extension, in the genesis of the modern conservation movement.

⁷³ Kenneth Clark. The Gothic Revival. London: John Murray, 1962. p.120

Chapter 3 Religion and Architecture

Pugin

The choice of Gothic for the new parliament buildings in London cemented the status of a style and confirmed a popular change in taste. After the destruction of the old palace of Westminster in the fire of 1834, the design by Sir Charles Barry was accepted and executed. It must not seem as if he had taken it upon himself as some sort of maverick to submit a proposal in a style that was yet to benefit from popular favor and support. It was quite the contrary actually; as the committee in charge of accepting proposals for the project and issuing the commission to a very fortunate architect had already determined that the style would be Gothic. The factors or reasons are easy enough to understand or speculate on. Considering that sections of certain buildings on the site of the old Palace of Westminster, such as the Great Hall and St-Stephens had survived, their Gothic style would certainly not have been easy to match up with a classical building. The history and medieval architecture of the old site had a decisive effect on the choice of style, which we can surely accept and approve of. The other major reason, according to historians of the Revival, can be attributed to the fact that in this period, there was a well established and growing belief that the Gothic style was essentially English. And as Clark points out, even if some critics denounced this as false in the knowledge that it was in fact a French style, the general sentiment of patriotic and romantic nationalism was irresistible to most. Furthermore, the simplicity of the explanation at a time when the architectural style of an Empire's seat of government was being decided demanded such a clear cut decision: "Gothic must be used because it was the national style. Everyone

liked an argument which could be put so clearly, so shortly and with so few technicalities.”⁷⁴

One of the main ideas behind including our discussion of the construction of the new parliament buildings in the Gothic style was certainly not to claim that it was the definitive project that confirmed the status of the new found enthusiasm for the Gothic. It serves rather to highlight the awarding of a major civic building project to an architect that was to proceed with the use of the Gothic style for the first time. As mentioned earlier, until the 1830’s, most if not all buildings executed in the Gothic styles were either residential or ecclesiastical. The use of this style on what was arguably the most important commission of the century in England for a civic building says a lot about the well established popularity of the Gothic aesthetic at this particular juncture. Such is the importance of Barry’s design for the new parliament buildings, but there is more beyond this fact. As almost all historians of the Revival seem to hold Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin in such high regard as a central figure in the development of the subject at hand, it seems more than appropriate to mention the fact that Barry called upon his talents during the parliament project. Pugin was not only a very passionate and talented draughtsman, his contribution and legacy within the history of the Gothic Revival is unique and extremely pertinent to the issues we mean to address here. The words Eastlake used to express this in 1872 are quite revealing of Pugin’s position as the central figure marking the transition into the second phase of the Revival:

Whatever value in the cause we may attach to the crude and isolated examples of Gothic which belong to the eighteenth century, or to the efforts of such men as Nash and Wyatt, there can be little doubt that the revival of Medieval design received its chief impulse in our own day from the energy and talents of one architect whose name marks an epoch in the history of

⁷⁴ Kenneth Clark. The Gothic Revival. London: John Murray, 1962. p. 115

British art, which, while art exists at all, can never be forgotten.⁷⁵

Although all may not be in agreement, it would seem fair to claim that Pugin made his mark more as a writer, critic, and theorist, rather than as an actual architect. His work as an architect was considered truer and more accurate than what had come before him and his approach was, by almost all accounts, respected and admired. He had been renowned for his talent as a draughtsman since he was still a child, sketching medieval buildings in England and France while accompanying his architect father on professional visits. These exercises of observing and copying proved invaluable as Pugin later became known for his knowledge of Gothic detail and authentic elements. While his first real employment outside of his father's office had been to design and execute the medieval stage scenery for a show at the Covent Garden Theatre, his romantic and theatrical tendencies proved to be no obstacle for his well researched familiarity with true Gothic details. In terms of architectural aesthetics, we can claim with much certainty that Pugin metaphorically "raised the bar" for other architects practicing in the Gothic style and contributed to the appearance of a much greater quality of work. He not only did so by simply demonstrating his superior "archeological" knowledge of the Gothic style, but he also brought a new set of elements into the equation. With Pugin, faith, ritual, morality, and religion were suddenly included into any consideration of what could belong to the Revival. This new dimension gradually saw the light of day following Pugin's involvement with the Parliament building project. It was quite a significant shift and most tend to agree that he was responsible for it, as Clark emphasizes:

A few years later Gothic was fortified with principles stricter and more comprehensive than those on which classical buildings were based; and architects had come to look on

⁷⁵ Charles L. Eastlake. A History of the Gothic Revival. Ed. and Intro. J. Mordaunt Crook. New York: Humanities Press, 1970. p.145

Gothic not as a style, but as a religion. A change had taken place in the whole nature of the Revival. The man who brought about this change was Pugin.⁷⁶

The idea that architecture could be scrutinized and analyzed on moral and religious grounds was certainly a new step in the development of the Revival. Although it may not have been the first time in the history of the western world that architecture was judged on elements such as these, Pugin's approach had quite a definitive impact on his peers and all those involved in the construction of Christian churches from that point on. Unlike Ruskin, Pugin attributed much attention to the "society" that produced a certain aesthetic or style for its churches, rather than putting such great emphasis on the happiness or morality of the actual laborers building it. Much like Ruskin, Pugin did have a similar impact in promoting, or at least inspiring, the modern labor movement and the general socialist element that was on the verge of fully coming to life in nineteenth century England. His utopian vision of the middle ages put him in a select group of his "contemporaries" such as Ruskin, Morris and even Marx, although with certain obvious discrepancies, as Lewis remarks:

Pugin yearned for the humane and cohesive society of the middle ages when a common faith and not capitalism was the organizing principle. Marx had no use for religion but his appreciation of medieval society and its communal and cooperative aspects resembled Pugin's, as did his horror at the dehumanizing nature of modern labour.⁷⁷

The similarities brought to light between Pugin and one of the most scrutinized figures in modern history were significantly overshadowed by their differences on the subject of religion. Although Marxism was a fundamentally atheistic movement, Pugin's utopian vision of the middle ages was largely inspired by his devout belief in the principles of the Catholic faith.

⁷⁶ Kenneth Clark. The Gothic Revival. London: John Murray, 1962. p.122

⁷⁷ Michael J.Lewis. The Gothic Revival. New York: Thames and Hudson, 2002. p.86

Pugin's critique and theory of architecture was based on a few very clear principles, all reverting back to his desire to promote the Gothic aesthetic as the only true style or form of Christian architecture. The first principle that is omnipresent throughout his written works is his deep hatred for classical architecture. As he was born into a time and place still greatly defined by neo-classicism, Pugin most probably felt that its continued use for architectural projects was a clear target on which he could continue to take aim. Adding to this was the fact that as a deeply religious man, Pugin could not overlook the fact that the sources of neo-classicism were essentially pagan and had no clear links to the Christian faith. We may consider his point valid in this particular case, although the Roman Church had commissioned a very significant amount of Ecclesiastical construction projects showcasing elements of classical antiquity in the centuries that had preceded his own.

Another phenomenon he deplored was the overly bare and simple churches that had appeared in England following the protestant reformation, but most importantly, following the puritanical era of the seventeenth century. While many other protestant denominations practiced their religion in nothing more than square boxes with rows of benches and a pulpit at the front, the Anglican Church had also been seriously stripped of symbolic ornamentation and imagery since its first contact with iconoclasts centuries before. While Pugin drew great criticism in England for wanting to bring back these elements in Anglican Churches, his true intentions could not really have been to reconvert the whole nation back to Catholicism as his critics seemed to insinuate. The symbolic imagery and ornamentation Pugin longed to see return to the churches of England was, in his mind, far more noble and acceptable than what had existed prior to the Council of Trent. He argued that the alternative was far more worthy of contempt: "There is no fear at the present time of sacred representations being regarded with superstitious reverence: there is far greater danger that, holy symbols and figures being

replaced by pagan fables or bare walls, men will lose all remembrance of the glorious mysteries they represented.”⁷⁸

Pugin saw a great link between the aesthetics of an authentic medieval church executed in the Gothic style and the ritualistic functions that it meant to accommodate. The sacraments and rituals that had been retained in the Catholic ceremonies had certainly not all survived in the Anglican sphere. The need for elements like chancels screens and altars not only disappeared, but were considered almost heretical to bring back into the fold of Anglican Church architecture at this point in time. Furthermore, the change in ritual over the centuries had resulted in the loss and destruction of such beautifully executed architectural elements through restoration work or deliberate damage. This at once had a direct effect on the state of England’s many medieval churches and on those that were yet to be built in the now popular Gothic style. Pugin understood this and passionately sought to remedy the situation. In his *Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture*, Pugin first aims his words at Catholics in England on this subject: “They hold precisely the same faith, and in essentials retain the same ritual as the ancient English Church. They, consequently, require precisely the same arrangement of church, the same symbols and ornaments as were common in this country previous to the schism.”⁷⁹ Then to the other denominations in the country: “The various religious communities are bound by the same rule to recite the same office, and have the same duties to perform as those who erected and used the many solemn buildings, now alas! in ruins, which are scattered all over the land.”⁸⁰

Although we cannot, as mentioned earlier, realistically believe that Pugin thought he would be the one to bring an end to the Anglican Church and restore the Catholic faith in the country, he could not help but try. In his

⁷⁸ A.W.N. Pugin. *An apology for the revival of Christian architecture in England*. London: J. Weale, 1843. p.30

⁷⁹ Ibid. p.22

⁸⁰ Ibid. p.22

writings, Pugin did not shy away from providing recommendations to the Anglican Church in terms of ritual or practice, as he could not separate these from those concerning ecclesiastical architecture. Even if he knew that his influence on bringing back ritual would be limited at best, he still proceeded with his ideology in what concerned the style that should be employed for the country's churches:

With respect to the present Anglican Church the case is, of course, by no means so clear and positive. Still, if she acted on her present acknowledged doctrines and discipline, without even taking into consideration any probable change in her position, she must turn to Catholic antiquity for the types of her architecture and ornament."⁸¹

This fairly general statement from his *Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture* is then followed by an enumeration and explanation of every element he thought should have a place in every Anglican Church: "As I have shown the Anglican Church requires bell towers, spires, naves, chancels, screens, fonts, altars, sacred symbols and ornaments".⁸² Pugin then proceeds with his usual anti classical sentiment, adding a hint of sarcasm: "I will ask whether the types of these various features are to be found in the ancient pointed churches of England, or in the classic temples of antiquity?"⁸³ These ideas laid out by Pugin had a definitive impact and caused reactions from his contemporaries. Although there may have been much resistance directly related to his choice of religion, his views on architecture were undeniable to most. The importance of Pugin's contribution is put into context by Eastlake as early as 1872:

He describes the proper position and purpose of the chancel screen, rood and rood loft; the plan and number of the sedilia; the use of the sacarium and revestry; the shape and furniture of the altar. These are matters upon which at the present time the clergy of neither Church would require much information;

⁸¹ A.W.N. Pugin. *An apology for the revival of Christian architecture in England*. London: J. Weale, 1843. p.25

⁸² Ibid. p.31

⁸³ Ibid. p.31

but it must be remembered that before Pugin began to write, ecclesiastical sentiment was rare, and artistic taste was rarer.⁸⁴

Pugin was very effective and influential because of his undeniable passion and expertise on the matters of Gothic Architecture. His justification of style being the reflection of purpose and function resonated with many, including Ruskin and Morris who would later restate this in various ways. This ideal was not only an attack on frivolous decorations and accents, it was an expression of truth and enlightened thought. Pugin knew how to express this quite eloquently, as demonstrated here in an excerpt from his famous book *Contrasts*: “It will be readily admitted that the great test of architectural beauty is the fitness of the design to the purpose for which it is intended, and that the style of a building should so correspond with its use that the spectator may at once perceive the purpose for which it was erected.”⁸⁵ This statement accommodates his ideas on the unbreakable bond between ritual and architecture while providing justification to more utilitarian minds that may have had any interest in these matters at the time. Arguably his greatest work, *Contrasts* was quite dramatic and uncompromising in its approach. It was a passionate rejection of classicism in architecture, as it was described to be in direct opposition to the Gothic aesthetic, the only truly Christian aesthetic according to Pugin. And this was so not only on an aesthetic level, but also in terms of moral quality. In this book we get a clear view of Pugin’s utopian or idealized vision of the middle ages contrasted with the “pagan” classical architecture that plagued his times. This is achieved both in words and in drawings. It is a beautiful and entertaining book, which also gives us a glimpse of the similar social ideals that would also be at the center of Ruskin and Morris’ “systems”. In his introduction to the book, Hitchcock describes the work quite neatly: “Contrasts is neither an archaeological treatise nor a

⁸⁴ Charles L. Eastlake. *A History of the Gothic Revival*. Ed. and Intro. J. Mordaunt Crook. New York: Humanities Press, 1970. p.154

⁸⁵ A.W.N. Pugin. *Contrasts*. New York: Humanities Press, 1969. p.1

collection of models for direct emulation. It is a polemical work whose motivation was almost as much religious, and even social, as architectural.⁸⁶

Anyone reading Pugin can understand how he was a controversial figure as a Catholic in early nineteenth century England. He was by far the most vocal and qualified character to have taken up the cause of explaining and “framing” the Gothic Revival, he was also the first. It can be believed that his insistence on expressing the undeniable connection between religion and architecture gave him the sort of “gravitas” needed for his ideas to mark the collective unconscious in such a way. The fact that he was a Catholic only came to be a sort of annoyance for those who felt it was not right to engage in his views on architecture for that simple reason, all the while making him one of the most revered personalities of the Gothic Revival in England. As with any true Romantic, his approach was poetic and emotional when describing a Church built according to proper “Christian” rules:

Like the religion itself, their foundations are in the cross, and they rise from it in majesty and glory. The lofty nave and choir, with still loftier towers, crowned by clusters of pinnacles and spires, all directed towards heaven, beautiful emblems of the Christian’s brightest hope, the shame of the Pagan; the cross, raised on high in glory, a token of mercy and forgiveness, crowning the sacred edifice, and placed between the anger of God and the sins of the city.⁸⁷

Although his sincerity and genius were never in doubt, his religion did eventually limit his capacity to gain the approval of his peers on a professional level. His ideals and principles were also in peril of not being applied in the physical world until an Anglican organization took it up for itself. The situation is well explained by Lewis:

While he (Pugin) enjoyed great stature abroad, as a Catholic in a protestant country he could never win full acceptance as a

⁸⁶ H.R. Hitchcock. Introduction. Contrasts. By A.W.N. Pugin. New York: Humanities Press, 1969. p.13

⁸⁷ A.W.N. Pugin. Contrasts. New York: Humanities Press, 1969. p.4

reformer of religious architecture. Not until he himself was personally disassociated from his doctrine could the Church of England embrace it. This feat was the accomplishment of the Ecclesiological Society.”⁸⁸

Ecclesiology

As was the case with Pugin, Ecclesiology is essential to outline in our attempt to establish the effects of the English Church’s idealized vision of the middle ages through its acceptance and promotion of Gothic as the one and only aesthetic for Church architecture. It is difficult to determine with much certainty when the phenomenon came to be for it is something that first lived in hearts and minds before spilling onto tracts and pamphlets. Eastlake chose to outline the causes of its appearance after the decision of constructing the new Parliament buildings in the Gothic style, as he explains: “The revival of ancient Church Architecture received a fresh and no less powerful impetus from the rapidly increasing taste for ecclesiology, which had by this time begun to develop itself in England.”⁸⁹ He continues outlining the causes:

First to the necessity of providing additional churches (...) and secondly, to that remarkable change which was gradually taking place in the religious convictions of English Churchmen (...) representing a tendency to invest the Church with higher spiritual functions, and to secure for it a more symbolical and imposing form of worship than had for many generations past been claimed or maintained.⁹⁰

This statement by Eastlake expresses a fairly standard view shared by historians of the Revival. The Ecclesiological concerns that were brought into the fold, beginning in the 1830’s had a definitive impact on where and how the Gothic Revival would evolve. It also touched upon something more profound and fundamental than what had transpired up to that point in the

⁸⁸ Michael J. Lewis. *The Gothic Revival*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 2002. p.90

⁸⁹ Charles L. Eastlake. *A History of the Gothic Revival*. Ed. and Intro. J. Mordaunt Crook. New York: Humanities Press, 1970. p.187

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* p.187

name of romantic or nationalistic concerns. The major elements of Ecclesiology were largely defined by two particular organizations: the Oxford Movement, also known as Tractarianism, and the Cambridge Camden Society, who would later change its name to the Ecclesiological Society in 1845.

Although these two Societies were certainly not the first archeological or antiquarian societies to appear on the grounds of England's two most famous and revered Universities, they were the most influential and effective and have been ever since. The Oxford movement and the Camden society tapped into a popular desire for renewal of religious ritual and symbolism in the nation's churches, and this renewed religious fervor had a direct effect on the nation's architecture. While this may have been the case, the whole situation seems quite unlikely to the contemporary reader, as Clark points out:

It is hard to believe that the pietistic archaeological society of a University should have a very great influence on architecture. Yet such was undoubtedly the case. With the spread of Tractarian doctrines men began to discover within themselves a half-repressed desire for ritual; and symbolism achieved the sudden popularity of a new sport. The Camden Society was first in the field, and remained the most influential of many similar bodies.⁹¹

Since the puritan days, there had been a gradual disappearance of any emotion, color, or flavor in English religious practice. Scholars agree that the evangelical or utilitarian tendencies of the clergy and Church officials had, over the centuries, brought the organization to such a bleak point in terms of architectural aesthetics and ceremonial tradition. It would seem as though the great fear of taking part in anything remotely associated to the Roman Church and the Pope had driven the Anglican Church to strip itself of any element that may be reminiscent of the time when we spoke of just one united Church. In the early nineteenth century, a popular sentiment seemed to converge with a common desire to revitalize the nation's churches, as well as their attendance and the popular interest in religion. With that in mind, enthusiastic university

⁹¹ Kenneth Clark. The Gothic Revival. London: John Murray, 1962. p.161

students passionate about architecture proceeded to form organizations that would bring back the traditional Gothic aesthetics, without necessarily knowing they would have such an impact. Lewis describes the early stages of the Oxford movement:

Beginning in 1833, the first critical tracts were published, urging a revival of traditional forms of worship. No longer should worship concentrate solely on the spoken word of the sermon, but the sacred, sacramental rites should be revived, restoring the solemnity and mystery of pre-reformation worship.⁹²

Contrary to the Romantic phase of the Revival, the ecclesiological period, if we may call it that, gave a sense of purpose and legitimacy to the whole affair.

The desire for the renewal of passion and emotion in religious practice and architecture by extension was not restricted to the Anglicans. As mentioned earlier, Pugin had been critical of his own Catholic Church also “losing its way” and having a negative impact on the choice of architectural style in the centuries that preceded his own. Although this may have been the case, the degree to which the Anglicans had strayed was much greater than the Catholics, as Eastlake emphasizes: “The Roman Catholics had perverted the forms and ceremonies which pertained to the ancient faith. The Anglicans had almost forgotten.”⁹³ The influence of Pugin was definitely present in the ideas of the university societies that sprang up and gave the Revival its second wind in this period. As Clark explains, the Revival would have probably died out had it not been for the appearance of these pious architectural societies who, like Pugin, at once harnessed the power of public dissatisfaction and fueled it. Contrary to Pugin, the Oxford society which preceded the Cambridge Camden Society, was more enthralled by the idea of reviving religious traditions than architectural aesthetics, as Clark explains:

⁹² Michael J. Lewis. *The Gothic Revival*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 2002. p.90

⁹³ Charles L. Eastlake. *A History of the Gothic Revival*. Ed. and Intro. J. Mordaunt Crook. New York: Humanities Press, 1970. p.154

The Tractarians had arrived at Gothic architecture by reversing Pugin's position. He had said: to revive Gothic architecture you must also revive old forms of worship. They said: To revive old forms of worship you must revive Gothic architecture. His impulse had been primarily architectural, theirs was primarily religious; and since religion is a wider and more exciting topic than architecture, their theories of Gothic became more influential than his.⁹⁴

The Cambridge Camden society would later take the lead and become one of the most powerful agents promoting the Gothic aesthetic in Victorian England, to a point where they would eventually be described as dangerous by some of their contemporaries. The idea was essentially the same as it was with the Oxford Society, yet to achieve their goals, the "Camdens" were reputed as being quite uncompromising in their promotion of the Gothic aesthetic as the only true Christian architecture.

The ecclesiological movement provides us with a prime example of the "Church" and its idealized vision of the middle ages being the driving force behind a revival that would bring about "copyist" architecture and the destruction of certain of the nation's architectural treasures. The embodiment of their ideals would later fuel William Morris' own crusade to defend authentic English architecture issued from all phases of history, including those that were additions to Gothic buildings. As we continue to examine the causes and consequences of the Gothic Revival as the primary source of William Morris' founding of the modern architectural conservation movement, we must be certain to include the Ecclesiological Societies in our definition of it. Like the loss of ritual and essentially Gothic elements in the church architecture of England, the Ecclesiological Revival was the accomplishment of individual members of the clergy and parishioners. Unlike the Catholic Church, which moves on papal bulls and conclusions arrived at through councils, the Anglican Church did so through the fervor of its members and leaders. While the head of the Anglican Church has always

⁹⁴ Kenneth Clark. The Gothic Revival. London: John Murray, 1962. p.155

remained the sovereign of the United Kingdom, it is not comparable to the centralized system which answers to the Catholic Pope. It is therefore important to point out that when we speak of the “Church” within the confines of this research, we are also referring to the Societies in question, not only to the official Anglican organization. Moreover, the ranks of the Cambridge and Oxford Societies were composed of many characters of diverse occupations, but certainly had an important contingent of clergymen.

The period in which William Morris came of age was one of profound and tumultuous transformations. The dawn of the nineteenth century brought with it a series of socio-economical changes which affected all major dimensions of English society. The advent of industrialization, as well as the increasingly apparent domination of the capitalist economic model provided the necessary impetus for important migrations towards urban centers and unprecedented growth in general. By the same stroke, traditional class structures and social hierarchies were gradually redrawn or modified according to a new set of rules. As Great Britain began the nineteenth century as a traditional agrarian society to then later turn into a nation of industry and manufacturing, the cleavage between urban and rural no longer sufficed in characterizing English society. The century saw a complete transformation of society in both settings, in turn affecting traditional socio-economic and class structures. Chris Brooks describes the impact on rural society: “The traditional patterns of work and social relations that characterized the old rural community were supplanted by the horizontal cleavages of class. Contract replaced custom, though agricultural workers were slow to recognize their identity as a rural proletariat.”⁹⁵ He then contrasts it with the urban dimension: “In the raw cities, by contrast, customary structures vanished more quickly and more completely, abolished by the logic of laissez-faire and the

⁹⁵ Chris Brooks. Introduction. *The Victorian Church: Architecture and Society*. Eds. Chris Brooks and Andrew Saint. New York: Manchester University Press, 1995. p.1

factory system.”⁹⁶ The capitalist utopia with its division of labor and obsession with profit at all cost had now become a reality.

The significance of these great changes in nineteenth century England relating to our topic is quite easily understood. The social changes and the impact of industrialization had a profound effect on the nation’s ecclesiastical architecture. In the century that, according to Brooks, saw the population go from 16 million in 1801 to over 41 million in 1901, the Anglican Church launched the greatest church building campaign of its history. Even more so, the “High Church” Anglican revival of the 1830’s had its effect on the physical architecture of the nation through intensive restoration programs. This renewed fervor and enthusiasm for building and restoring was directly related to the institution’s desire to reconnect with the people, as it is known that the Church’s flock had grown thinner through the last several decades. The main challenges that had led to the Church’s decline in membership are attributed to a few different concepts in the work of Chris Brooks. While on the one hand the Church had gradually alienated itself from the population it served through its basic structure and hierarchy, it was the questionable behavior of landowning bishops and churchmen, or at least the perception of their wrong doing that gradually led people to question the pertinence and authority of the Anglican organization, as Brooks explains: “Anglicanism, rather than being responsive to the whole of the nation from which it claimed allegiance, was perceived as the morally coercive arm of the ruling elite”.⁹⁷ The other major factor according to Brooks is the clear gains that “non conformist” or “dissenting” protestant sects had been making since the mid eighteenth century, most notably Methodists, Baptists, and Congregationalists. Although this may have been a decisive factor, the ground that was lost to other factions was only a symptom of a rot that had long ago taken hold of the Anglican organization, as Brooks also emphasizes:

⁹⁶ Chris Brooks. Introduction. *The Victorian Church: Architecture and Society*. Ed. Chris Brooks and Andrew Saint. New York: Manchester University Press, 1995. p.1

⁹⁷ Ibid. p.4

The impact of Methodism and the New Dissent accelerated a long-term decline in allegiance to the Church of England. It seems clear that its membership had been falling in real terms from at least the middle of the eighteenth century, and by the early nineteenth century Anglicanism appeared to be fast losing its hold on the people it claimed to serve.⁹⁸

The 1830's saw a number of reforms and commissions put into place, most notably in the realm of finances where the Church had been perceived as crooked and abusive for some time. The spiritual revival that we have already briefly mentioned in the previous section also had a decisive effect from this point as ecclesiological societies such as those from Oxford and Cambridge sought to bring back ancient ritual and ceremony to Anglican liturgy. The population's thirst for a more emotional and intimate form of worship was a force that the Anglican Church planned on harnessing as it embarked on its building program. The renewed fervor that was to save Anglicanism from its long decline not only gave hope that it would stop hemorrhaging parishioners, so to speak, but that it would in fact gain some new ground and attract fresh souls and funding to the Church. Brooks describes this fact as it is central to the building campaigns that would follow: "It was just at this period, when even churchmen were gloomily prophesying the end, that Anglicanism reasserted itself. Spiritual revival had been under way for a couple of decades as the impetus of evangelicalism began to make itself felt, securing not only influence but also, crucially; patronage."⁹⁹

The Church and its Aesthetic

As we briefly reviewed the ideas of Pugin, as well as the Ecclesiological and Tractarian Societies in the previous sections within the

⁹⁸ Chris Brooks. Introduction. *The Victorian Church: Architecture and Society*. Ed. Chris Brooks and Andrew Saint. New York: Manchester University Press, 1995. p.5

⁹⁹ Ibid. p.6

context of the Gothic Revival, their importance in religious terms is quite central to the question at hand. The idea that a certain architectural aesthetic could serve the devices of the Anglican Church on their road to recovery was certainly not a new one, but it is difficult to recall another period in western civilization where it had been so effective in transforming contemporary taste for such a large amount of people spread over such great distances. Although, for example, the early Italian baroque had served the efforts of the Catholic Counter Reformation to a certain degree, it was arguably smaller in scope, influence, and impact on the “common man” as compared to what eventually transpired in the Anglo-Saxon world and beyond with the revival of the Gothic style. Also contrary to the above mentioned early Italian Baroque, evidence that the revival of the Gothic aesthetic had anything to do with the wishes and instructions of the head of the Church of England is somewhat lacking. As the Anglican Church was, at least in principle, lead by the English monarch, it is surprising to realize that the main thrust and enthusiasm which fueled the return of the Gothic style for all ecclesiastical buildings came from below, not from above. The impetus given to the Revival which William Morris hated so deeply came from clergymen, intellectuals, members of parliament, and ordinary citizens. As it is quite impossible to pinpoint with any sort of precision the exact time when the Revival gained undeniable prominence, it is equally impossible to do the same for identifying the specific people responsible for the Revival. What we can say with much certainty is that this Revival was a popular one. Although initiated by the Romantics, ideologically framed by the Church and various societies, the new middle class bought into it without necessarily supporting or even understanding the religious charge that came with it.

The 1830's mark an important transition for many reasons. First of all it was in this decade that Pugin wrote his most definitive works and rose to great prominence as a champion of a historically accurate Gothic style to become the nation's preferred architectural fashion for all churches and civic

construction. As mentioned in the previous chapter, his tone and morally authoritative voice on the subject meshed well with the rising evangelical sentiment that was growing in the country during this period. Lobbying for the return of ancient ritual to Church ceremony meant that the architecture of the churches had to accommodate the resurfacing of these. This was particularly pertinent to the times as Lewis remarks:

During the 1830's the Church of England was engaged in the turbulent process of renewal. Three centuries after the protestant reformation, many felt the Church had become remote and spiritually unfulfilling. It had systematically eliminated all the vestiges of Catholic ritual and ceremony, insulating itself from Rome but it had also estranged itself from the livelier currents of protestant worship.¹⁰⁰

The turbulent process of renewal mentioned here is an obvious reference to what is popularly known as the High Anglican Revival, which coincided perfectly with the writings of Pugin of the same decade, regardless of the fact that he was himself Catholic. There is clear evidence of a new energy and will to increase the popularity and pertinence of the Church and this was to be achieved through the use of architecture.

As we have mentioned that the Gothic Revival in the Church gained prominence through its members rather than through an executive order from its supreme leader, it is important to mention the essential involvement of the various groups and institutions that formed the most active and militant entities involved in the renewal. While the highly complex and multifaceted system of Church building in Victorian England will not be discussed in great detail here, for it is a lengthy subject in itself, the process through which an ecclesiastical building came to be is quite worthy of mention. It seems essential to point out that although the offices of the Anglican Church were the only ones with proper authority to initiate a church building project after

¹⁰⁰ Michael J. Lewis. The Gothic Revival. New York: Thames and Hudson, 2002. p.90

granted approval from Parliament, a number of commissions and organizations had a great influence on the aesthetic details and financial matters. The Cambridge Camden Society as well as the Oxford Movement, are both fine examples of organizations which greatly contributed to steering the Church and the Architects it hired towards the exclusive use of the High Gothic style for any new Church construction or restoration. In regards to this, Christopher Miele emphasizes the importance of architects and their work which came to be subsidized by the Church and informed by the work of architectural societies. In addition to this, Miele also challenges the widely held idea that architects of the time were simply involved in some sort of feeding frenzy when confronted with the spectacular amount of work available at the time. Their task and involvement is presented as one that is much more important than a simple business transaction, much more profound in its ultimate mission or undertaking:

The official and unofficial institutions of the Church were not simply fodder for a hungry profession. Churchmen charged architects with the task of refabricating the most enduring icons of the Anglican worship in the most efficient and persuasive way possible. An exact and certain system of knowledge, such as that provided by archaeology and architectural history, dispensed by a modern and reformed group of professionals, would bring the Church new strength and vigor, or so it was believed.¹⁰¹

The Cambridge Camden Society and the Oxford Movement were both major players in the ascension and permanent establishment of the High Gothic style as the dominant or even exclusive style for ecclesiastical architecture in the nineteenth century. Although others may have theorized and preached about its superior nature for a host of reasons, these two organizations put pressure on architects and had sufficient churchmen in their ranks to be successful in influencing the main parties concerned that a

¹⁰¹ Christopher Miele. "Their interest and habit: Professionalism and the Restoration of Medieval Churches, 1837-77". *The Victorian Church: Architecture and Society*. New York: Manchester University Press, 1995. p.169

particular style was the most appropriate for the Church's buildings. This particular style was not simply Gothic, but more specifically, the English Decorated style of Gothic. Much like Pugin, the above mentioned organizations opted for this particular phase in the development of the style as the truest and most excellent available for their churches for reasons which are still being debated today. In his history of the Gothic Revival, Kenneth Clark alludes to this question as to why the Victorians opted for the Decorated rather than any other: "The question now is what period of Gothic is the truest and most Christian. And for many reasons it was clear that one style and one only could be tolerated: the Decorated or Edwardian."¹⁰² He then offers up a simple explanation which is somewhat revealing of his thoughts on the Victorian mind: "Every movement, it was thought, must have a rise, a zenith and a decline, and the Victorians, with a mistaken sense of symmetry, always placed the zenith in the middle of a movement's course. The 'best period' was the central period."¹⁰³ There were virulent debates and discussions concerning this amongst church members, officials, critics, architects and common people. It is remarkable that the greater part of a nation's inventory in medieval Churches was put in peril by the choice of a style whose ultimate selection would, in the words of Clark, seem almost trivial.

The widespread interest in such seemingly frivolous questions is further evidence that the issues surrounding the renewal of the Anglican Church through the architecture of its buildings was of great importance to many, be they directly concerned or not. Determining which phase of Gothic was in fact the most "Gothic" seemed to be a fairly popular concern at the time. Organizations such as the Cambridge movement also came to the same conclusions as Lewis points out: "The Ecclesiological Society viewed Gothic architecture as the product of a prolonged process of historical evolution, which achieved perfection at the end of the thirteenth century, remaining at

¹⁰² Kenneth Clark. The Gothic Revival. London: John Murray, 1962. p.171

¹⁰³ Ibid. p.171

the peak for a time and slowly degenerating thereafter.”¹⁰⁴ As may be suspected, this point in time designates the period which saw the English Decorated style gain its prominence, therefore confirming the general views stated above were shared and promoted by such societies. The Ecclesiologist and Tractarians were not only “tastemakers” or trendsetters; they had a conscious agenda while choosing the “right” type of Gothic. It is well understood that these organizations were greatly concerned with issues such as archeological correctness, as well as religious purpose when singing the praises of any architectural style. Although we may stand accused of falsely characterizing the Oxford Tractarian Movement and Cambridge Camden Ecclesiological Society as one and the same, we shall occasionally continue to treat them as such. For the purpose of our undertaking the differences and discrepancies between the two are quite minor and superficial.

As we have mentioned earlier, the organizations known as Tractarian or Ecclesiological grew to great prominence and influence after their original founding in the 1830’s. Far from being marginal, the Ecclesiological movement drew its strength from some of the country’s most powerful players, especially in what concerned the matters of the Church, as Eastlake points out:

It received patronage and support from some of the highest dignitaries of the English Church. Beneficed clergy, University dons, distinguished laymen in every condition of life, wealthy amateurs, as well as many an architect and artist of note, were enrolled among its members. With many of these the principles of reform, whether aesthetic or ecclesiastical, which it advocated, were extremely popular.¹⁰⁵

They also became a force to be reckoned with as many architects of the time may have been willing to testify. Their power to enforce their choice of style and architectural plan to all new Church construction and restorations was

¹⁰⁴ Michael J. Lewis. *The Gothic Revival*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 2002. p.106

¹⁰⁵ Charles L. Eastlake. *A History of the Gothic Revival*. Ed. and Intro. J. Mordaunt Crook. New York: Humanities Press, 1970. p.199

relentless. The ideal that they were promoting had much more to do with religion than aesthetic, it is therefore without reproach that we may suspect that they were conscious of their mission and felt that they had virtue and divine purpose on their side. This was particularly true for the Cambridge Society, as Clark emphasizes: “The Camdenians were not in a position to use their power mercifully. In a world full of doubt their intolerance was their strength, and they knew it. They were ruthless and infallible tyrants.”¹⁰⁶ The same could be said of the Oxford movement. Although they were regarded as less extreme or fanatical than the Camdenians, their desire to promote the Gothic aesthetic in the service of reviving religious sentiment for the Anglican Church was equally passionate and powerful, as Clark points out in one of his descriptions of the Movement:

I hope that no reader of these hasty paragraphs will imagine that the motives of the Oxford Movement were merely romantic. This, indeed, was the great mistake of the movement’s enemies in Oxford: they supposed that the Tractarians stood for no more than a sentimental medievalism which had long been fashionable, and they quite overlooked the theological learning and moral earnestness which made the movement solid.¹⁰⁷

It is certainly true that by the 1840’s, the romantic impetus behind the Gothic Revival had all but disappeared. By this time, the religious motives behind the Revival were omnipresent and could not be disassociated from the whole question. While Clark’s claims that “Fashion and economy had led to Gothic being applied to ecclesiastical architecture”¹⁰⁸ and that “the connection was too superficial to have survived practical difficulties”¹⁰⁹ seem to make much sense when regarding the overwhelming amount of restorations that took place in the second half of the nineteenth century as compared to new constructions, the romantic element must not be forgotten as central to

¹⁰⁶ Kenneth Clark. *The Gothic Revival*. London: John Murray, 1962. p.162

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. p.153

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. p.155

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. p.155

the beginnings of the whole movement. Clark further emphasizes the debt to the organizations in question for ensuring the further development and survival of the Revival:

Had Anglican requirements remained unaltered, Gothic would have been abandoned as a style for churches, and the Gothic Revival would have died with the death of Beckfordian romanticism. But the Tractarians wished to revive old ritual, and to do so they required churches in which it could accurately be performed—churches with altars and deep chancels; moreover, they wished to move the imagination through symbols, and for this they required the sculpture and architecture of the church to be rich in symbolical device. In short, they wanted a true Gothic church.¹¹⁰

As Christopher Miele explains: “It is no secret that church restoration and the Gothic Revival were tools of Anglican reform.”¹¹¹ The Revival was not only a tool, but it took on a life of its own in some ways. When referring to it, Michael Hunter expresses the thought that religious implications came to impact things in a less positive manner: “it was complicated by an ethical streak associated with the religious revival that lay behind it”.¹¹² This of course meshes well with the apparently tyrannical behavior of the Camdenians which would eventually lead them to change their name. Apart from the strange power over the practices of architects which they seemed to acquire in the 1840’s, the Ecclesiological movement, most notably the Cambridge Camden Society came to be associated with Catholicism in a time when there was great fear of such associations. As we have mentioned earlier, the fundamental principles that the Society promoted and championed were almost perfectly in line with what Pugin had been pushing. While all historians of the Revival take care of mentioning this popular and controversial association between “popism” and the doctrines of organizations

¹¹⁰ Kenneth Clark. *The Gothic Revival*. London: John Murray, 1962. p.155

¹¹¹ Christopher Miele. “Their interest and habit: Professionalism and the Restoration of Medieval Churches, 1837-77”. *The Victorian Church: Architecture and Society*. New York: Manchester University Press, 1995. p.166

¹¹² Michael Hunter, Introduction. Hunter, Michael, Ed. *Preserving the Past: The Rise of Heritage in Modern Britain*. Gloucestershire, 1996.

such as the Camdenians, it is Clark who gives it a fairly substantial place in his history of the Revival. For the sake of brevity, it seems practical to sum it up by quoting him saying that “the architectural doctrines of the Camden Society depended on the revival of Catholic ritual”¹¹³ and any enemies the Cambridge Camden Society surely used this stance to attack them. This was so even as the Society counted many clergymen amongst its members. The major factor also worthy of mention is that while it was huge in England, the nineteenth century also brought the revival of the Gothic aesthetic to the continent, where it was apparently automatically associated with the Pope. It would seem that this was all a mistake in free association if we give any credibility to what Eastlake had to say on the subject, although he is quite right in pointing out the religious persuasion of the two main advocates of the Revival:

It is a common error to suppose that the Church of Rome has encouraged to any great extent, or for any special purpose, the Revival of Gothic Architecture. (...) It is, however, remarkable that two of the first and in their time unquestionably the most eminent, apologists for the revival of the style in this country were Roman Catholics, Milner and Pugin.¹¹⁴

The controversy referred to above is of course but a footnote in the grand scheme of the Revival’s history. What should be remembered in regards to the question at hand is the overwhelming evidence and consensus around the fact that the Anglican Church made use of the Gothic aesthetic in the construction and Restoration of its Churches on a massive scale beginning in the 1840’s. This desire to build as they had more than five hundred years before led to the greatest campaign of Restorations ever known, and to the partial or complete destruction of innumerable Churches or elements whose authenticity could never be matched by reproductions or copies in the eyes of men like William Morris. It is therefore appropriate to point out that a credible

¹¹³ Kenneth Clark. The Gothic Revival. London: John Murray, 1962. p.163-4

¹¹⁴ Charles L. Eastlake. A History of the Gothic Revival. Ed. and Intro. J. Mordaunt Crook. New York: Humanities Press, 1970. p.118

case can be made to demonstrate how the creation of the modern architectural conservation movement under William Morris was directly linked and largely reactionary to the impact of the Anglican Church's ideologically driven building program. The impact of the Church's desire to tap into the religious enthusiasm of the day which took the form of a Gothic Revival, created a sufficiently dyer situation for the surviving architectural history of a nation. This was true enough for a wealthy upper middle class bourgeois named William Morris to take up arms against the whole structure and organization.

In one of his articles, Michael Hall takes a very refreshing look at the meaning of Anglican Church architecture between 1850 and 1870¹¹⁵ and expands upon some of the fundamental themes we have been describing thus far. While we have established that the involvement of the Church and religion in architecture ensured the survival and expansion of the Gothic Revival, Hall opens our eyes to the idea that from the mid-nineteenth century onwards the Revival may have taken a very different course. In describing the idea of development, he discusses how certain actors of the Revival began to question the extents to which most believed that the Church owed its authority to its links to the past, which in turn cast doubt on its great promotion of the authentic Gothic aesthetic as the model of choice. As he mentions, a great part of this move away from the precepts of the early Revival was due to the simple fact that a link to the past also meant a direct link to the Roman Catholic Church. Furthermore, the concept of revival itself suggested that originality and modernity was impossible when completely defined by ancient models. Hall describes the Gothic Revival as entering a new phase by the end of the mid-century mark:

However, at the end of the 1840's a new emphasis on the modern rather than on the early Church seems to have helped to set the Gothic Revival in England on an entirely unexpected course. For some time, there had been growing unease about

¹¹⁵ Michael Hall. "What do Victorian Churches Mean? Symbolism and Sacramentalism in Anglican Church Architecture, 1850-1870". *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*. vol. 59, no. 1, March 2000, p. 78-95.

the devotion of Gothic architects to archaeological exactitude in the face of concern that the nineteenth century, so progressive in every other aspect, had yet to create its own style. If doctrine could develop, so surely could architecture, and if authority lay in the modern rather than the ancient Church, why should Gothic not be modern rather than simply a revival of ancient forms?¹¹⁶

As discussed in our opening chapter, the “fear” that Victorian architects would fail to develop their own style was one that William Morris definitely shared, although in his case it may have been more of an occasion to be critical of certain peers rather than a genuine concern for the legacy of his contemporaries. Regardless of this malicious speculation, the concept brought forth by Hall forces us to consider that although men like Morris were still railing against restoration architects and setting up a Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in 1877, decades before others were also concerned about the development of a “modern” style in the midst of all the seemingly overwhelming enthusiasm for the middle ages. This article not only questions all that we have been reviewing about the importance of religious significance in the works of the Revival, but also suggests that science and secular ideas found their way in the architecture of the Gothic Revival within the timeframe we have been outlining. Hall implies that searching for traces of protomodernist elements in the architecture of the Revival is certainly not a new concept for scholars, yet more recently some have pushed further in suggesting that even the influence of certain figures like Ruskin contributed to this alternative to strict architectural historicism:

Subsequent historians have taken a more sophisticated interest in the use of historical styles, and have realized, for example, that the Ruskinian emphasis on nature as the origin of Gothic ornament was essentially scientific in that it demanded a close

¹¹⁶Michael Hall. “What do Victorian Churches Mean? Symbolism and Sacramentalism in Anglican Church Architecture, 1850-1870”. *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*. vol. 59, no. 1, March 2000, p.80

observation of the natural world and an ability to schematize it.¹¹⁷

Hall's examination of science and technology finding its way in the realm of Church Architecture is truly enlightening, especially in demonstrating how new ideas in astronomy, geology, and the advent of Darwinism was somehow integrated in some projects of the day. Furthermore, it is pointed out through the words of Eve Blau how these new concepts offered relief from the religion and medievalism of the previous decades "in secularizing the Gothic Revival and freeing it from historicism, ecclesiology and antiquarianism. It also gave Gothic new associations with modern science, technology and progress."¹¹⁸ Hall also takes great care in pointing out that "modernity" still was not automatically at odds with religion and how it impacted architecture: "It is now often forgotten that the passion for geology and natural history, which obsessed clergymen as much as anybody in the first half of the century, seemed to enhance religious belief rather than undermine it, for science was believed to reinforce the argument from design."¹¹⁹

The article continues in a discussion of how new discoveries in geology and science not only failed to cast doubt on the existence of God, but rather served to redefine the popular understanding of the concept. The enlightenment idea of a creator turned "absentee landlord" was replaced by one of an active designer constantly improving upon his creations. The way this found its way into the Church architecture of the time according to Hall was through naturalistic forms in sculpture and ornament, as well as metaphorical representations deliberately linking science and religion. One of his examples is actually a stained glass representation of Genesis by William

¹¹⁷ Michael Hall. "What do Victorian Churches Mean? Symbolism and Sacramentalism in Anglican Church Architecture, 1850-1870". *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*. vol. 59, no. 1, March 2000, p.81

¹¹⁸ Eve Blau. *Ruskinian Gothic: the Architecture of Deane and Woodward 1845-1861*. Princeton: 1982. p.74

¹¹⁹ Michael Hall. "What do Victorian Churches Mean? Symbolism and Sacramentalism in Anglican Church Architecture, 1850-1870". *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*. vol. 59, no. 1, March 2000, p.81

Morris' firm. He then remarks that this was not to last and the conscious attempts to use science and Darwinism to confirm or explain the creation of the universe was not to be the only popular concern represented in Church architecture or decoration. Instead we read of a greater concern with the meaning of the sacraments and liturgy, much like that which we have described at length in previous paragraphs describing the Ecclesiological and Tractarian groups. The symbolism found in Churches was understood in more simple terms, as in medieval times. Allen points out how the architect Benjamin Webb, along with John Mason Neale translated and published a thirteenth century book on the symbolism of Church architecture and ornamentation. A book that explained the symbolic nature of all aspects of liturgy. He points out that in their introduction they clearly laid out their objective: "We mean to convey the idea that, by the outward and visible form, is signified something inward and spiritual: that the material fabric symbolizes, embodies, figures, represents, expresses, answers to, some abstract meaning."¹²⁰

Essentially, the first half of Hall's article establishes the theory that during the period of great church building and restoration projects, three great "concerns" framed the meaning of symbolism in Church architecture, in three more or less concurrent phases:

So the three phases of the Gothic Revival between about 1840 and 1870 are contiguous with three ways of understanding a church building as symbolic form: what might be called the iconographical, as understood by Neale and Webb; the metaphorical, as understood by Ruskin and Beresford Hope; and the sacramental."¹²¹

The importance of this in relation to this paper is that while Hall brings our attention to the secular elements that fueled the Revival, he also confirms our

¹²⁰ John Mason Neale and Benjamin Webb. The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments. London, 1843. xxvi.

¹²¹Michael Hall. "What do Victorian Churches Mean? Symbolism and Sacramentalism in Anglican Church Architecture, 1850-1870". *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*. vol. 59, no. 1, March 2000, p.87

idea that Morris' attitude towards Revival Church architecture and restoration put him at odds with the institution and its proponents. As Hall points out, the advent of architectural conservation coincided with a gradual move away from religion: "In some ways this is curious, as the movement became entwined with a deeply secularizing attitude to church buildings that emphasized their value as historical documents over and above their modern spiritual function."¹²² William Morris' creation of the modern architectural conservation movement can then be interpreted as a direct affront to the Church, as Chris Miele informs us: "The act of conservation, which enshrines the very decay of the church fabric, is a commentary on the decline of the institution of the church (...) because the scrupulous preservation of the physical fabric arrests the church at a particular historical moment, it connotes a similar end to the building's spiritual mission".¹²³

The quote above by Miele is very clever in how it explains the simple act or doctrine of architectural conservation as a clear challenge to the validity of a Church and its mission as a building. We were never able to find clear evidence that Morris was a fervent atheist, promoter of secularism or anything of the sort. In light of Miele's interpretation, his whole ideology of conservation was more or less an offense to the Church. Not only was he seeking to put an end to restoration practices, he was also rendering the buildings function as invalid in its contemporary context. As we reviewed in the opening chapter, William Morris' ideas on architectural conservation were certainly not his alone; they came about gradually over the decades with significant support from architects and others. It would be stretching to claim that his whole enterprise succeeded through his own spite for the undertakings of the Anglican Church. As demonstrated by Hall in his article, there was a

¹²² Michael Hall. "What do Victorian Churches Mean? Symbolism and Sacramentalism in Anglican Church Architecture, 1850-1870". *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*. vol. 59, no. 1, March 2000, p.90

¹²³ Christopher Miele. "Their interest and habit: Professionalism and the Restoration of Medieval Churches, 1837-77". *The Victorian Church: Architecture and Society*. New York: Manchester University Press, 1995. p.170

significant secular current in Church architecture by the middle of the nineteenth century and Morris was capable of harnessing its force to put his ideas on conservation into practice and gain support from his contemporaries.

Conclusion

In our attempt to better understand the genesis of the modern architectural conservation movement, we have shown that the implications were much more complex than a mere question of aesthetics. The consequences of the Gothic Revival on England's architecture were very serious and warranted decisive action from those who wished to protect it for future generations. With hindsight we can say that the founding of the SPAB may not have been the first but was definitely the most lasting and meaningful remedy to the destruction of authentic medieval architecture. William Morris' campaign against restoration has proven itself to have laid down the most permanent rules and guidelines on how to treat heritage architecture in the western world. As we have set out to demonstrate, Morris was not fighting against a strange unidentifiable evil which was eating away at the nation's architectural treasure indiscriminately. He rather positioned himself against a conscious and deliberate campaign to rebuild and restore which was driven by ideological goals and concerns. As we have demonstrated, the Anglican Church sought to regain some of the importance it had lost in the previous centuries by catering to a popular enthusiasm for medieval buildings and ancient Christian ritual. While a nation's inventory of medieval buildings was the most precious of treasures capable of telling a tale of the past, we can understand how the question of its treatment and conservation could have put Morris and the actions of the Anglican Church at odds with each other. As the remaining architectural evidence of a civilization most often informs us of what made them great or not, the opposition between what the Church was doing and what Morris did in reaction to it can credibly be understood as a struggle to define the middle ages in the realm of collective memory.

We sought to establish the fact that medievalism had been very much in vogue in England since the eighteenth century and was a logical progression from the Romantic Movement. The enthusiasm for the middle

ages gained momentum and by the middle of the nineteenth century, had developed into a full fledged fashion which affected the nation's designers, architects, writers, and artists, while also gaining support in the general population. In doing so we were able to demonstrate that William Morris was very much a man of his time and grew to love and understand the middle ages on a level which was beyond the capacity of most. Through his study, translation and composition of epic poems and medieval romance, Morris grew familiar with the aesthetics of the times and formed an emotional link with them. Through his study of history and his appreciation for the English medieval architecture he had the privilege of growing up around, Morris learned to love what he would later have to protect. In following the lead of men like Ruskin, Morris bought into a new way of analyzing civilization from the point of view of its artistic and cultural production. This in turn led to an admiration for certain social aspects of the middle ages, but mostly to a relative hatred of the times he lived in himself. In his appreciation of the Pre-Raphaelites we can recognise the romantic dreamer, while in his own artistic production we acquaint ourselves with Morris the medieval craftsman.

As we examined in a fairly thorough manner in this research, the Gothic Revival was on schedule to arrive whether Morris agreed to it or not. The interest and knowledge that had developed in regards to the middle ages through the eighteenth century came to fruition in the nineteenth century. The general love and appreciation for the Gothic aesthetic, which had been restricted to books and artefacts until a certain point, suddenly came to pour out onto the nation's architecture. From the outrageous construction projects commissioned by rich eccentrics who wished to mimic a dream world of romance and chivalry sprang forth more serious and carefully studied projects. The construction projects in question came to be synonymous with restoration. While the sources and origins of the Revival were deeply rooted in the Romantic ideals of the eighteenth century, by the time the Victorian era had arrived all such concerns were relegated to a much less important post. As

we have mentioned, the serious archaeological studies of Gothic artefacts, coupled with a growing desire to build authentic Gothic structures led to a much more sophisticated system of design and architecture. This of course was the natural progression of the Gothic Revival as it eventually pointed in a direction which would bring it to be at the centre of social, religious, and ideological concerns.

In our discussion of Pugin and Ecclesiology, we sought to outline the most prominent and effective advocates incorporating both religious and architectural concerns. While Pugin was only one man, who also happened to be a Catholic in Protestant England, his impact and real effect could certainly not have gone unnoticed. As we made sure to properly discuss, his desire to see old Catholic rituals once again become part of mass all over the country led to a veritable movement which had a great impact on the nation's architecture. In relating the architecture of a church and all its elements to the ritual functions they served, Pugin completely changed the course of the Gothic Revival. From aesthetic and archaeological concerns, it grew to incorporate religious concerns which the Anglican Church certainly did not ignore. When discussing Pugin, we emphasized his great knowledge and passion for medieval architecture, which was in fact a great point in common with William Morris. While this may have been the case, the religious functions that warranted the restoration of an authentic building in Pugin's mind certainly would not have been thought of along the same lines by Morris. As we have restated numerous times, the desire to "Gothicize" a medieval building to an imagined state of perfection was completely contrary to what Morris thought to be acceptable and most certainly, in our opinion, if it was done to serve some ideological purpose for the Church.

We may consider that the Cambridge Camden Society and the Oxford movement simply took Pugin's ideas and put them to practice through their influence and reach. By setting up architectural and archaeological societies

which concerned themselves with religion as being central to their areas of interest, the societies in question grew to influence the choices that were made with English architecture. As we reported, these societies had members from prominent spheres of society and often also had powerful churchmen in their ranks. This fact obviously led to their rise as some of the most influential elements in church building during the Victorian era. The choice of the decorated Gothic style as the only option for church architecture was enforced by these entities. As with Pugin, the link between the architecture, liturgy, and religious ceremony was the driving force behind their strength and popularity, which certainly was not displeasing to the Anglican Church. It is our view that the Ecclesiological and Tractarian Societies served the purposes of the Church and were prime movers of sorts in the destruction of authentic English medieval architecture.

While the Ecclesiological movement changed the course of the Gothic Revival by shifting the focus to morality and religion, rather than romanticism and archaeology, they would have remained a simple footnote in history had the Anglican Church not seized the opportunity presented to it. As we outlined how a popular movement led to a generalized desire for a return to passion and emotion in Church ceremony, the Anglicans saw the way to achieve their devices. We are not implying that they were wrong in doing so, but rather that the wave of restorations that followed certainly would not have occurred had they not had anything to gain from it. The desire for the Church to renew itself and regain what it had lost in importance during the course of the last two centuries made the solution all the more attractive. As ecclesiology took hold and mingled with a century old fascination for the Gothic aesthetic, the context was simply perfectly suited for what the Anglican Church chose to do with a very important portion of its property. Being the largest owner of medieval buildings in the country, it held the bulk of what all seemed to be fussing about in their hands. The choice to restore in the Gothic style was a conscious move to increase popularity and regain “market share” if you will.

The convergence of religion and architecture had never been so perfectly suited to have such a massive impact. Furthermore, it would seem fair to agree that the Gothic Revival would never have resulted in such a grand century of restorations had it remained the passion of a few romantic eccentrics. As we have seen, it was the ideologically driven building campaigns that breathed new life into it, and sustained its activities until the tide of restorations led to resistance and the creation of the modern conservation movement.

While William Morris was certainly not an admirer of the Anglican Church and its restoration campaigns, it was the economical implications that developed along with it that came to further displease the man. In the section entitled “The Business of Restoration,” we reviewed the long stayed consensus that restoration architects such as Street, Scott, and Butterfield made a fortune with the commissions given out by the Church at the height of the Revival between 1840 and 1875 and beyond. Furthermore, we also described the revisionist take that Christopher Miele expressed in being critical of Morris’ attitude towards these architects that were his contemporaries. While Morris clearly benefited from restoration commissions through his firm which made stained glass amongst other things, he chose to first take direct aim at the architects which worked on restoration projects as if they did so without question. Miele exposed the idea that Morris may have ignored the fact that certain architects had already begun to make their way towards a position that was closer to conservation. In the process he came to favour the image of the greedy architect, preying on the ignorant churchman for rhetorical reasons. While we tend to agree with Miele on this, we do believe that it is quite paradoxical how on the one hand he momentarily managed to excuse the Church in order to blame the profession instead. Although we can understand that it catered to his socialist penchant, we cannot help but see contradictions in how he also knew very well that the Church was the major culprit of restorations, as he even suggested that their property be nationalized later on. William Morris was enigmatic in a certain

way, but he was also a political activist charged full of passion, emotion and ego. He eventually would criticize both the Church and the profession for restoration, but we may understand his attack on restoration architects while ignoring the steps they may have taken towards conservation as one which demonstrated his lack of humility.

In reviewing much of William Morris' writings, it is quite clear that he certainly was not a quiet and complacent man who made secrets of his opinions. While we truly believe that the modern architectural conservation movement would not have been the same without him founding the SPAB, it is our opinion that his desire for recognition may have had an effect on his choice of which entities should be held responsible for the crime of restoration. Although we can agree that restoration architects played their part in destroying what could have been saved, it was the Church that had the power to start and stop work on what was arguably the greatest collection of authentic medieval architecture in Western Europe. Furthermore, we can realistically claim that Morris would never have been moved to found the SPAB had the Church not engaged in its extreme process of renewal through an enhancement of its artefacts. As we pointed to the contrast between the language in Morris' letter to the *Athenaeum* and the *Manifesto* in the same month and year, it is clear that Morris was capable of anger and denouncement, as well as appeasing. The fact of the matter remains that William Morris attributed great importance to his nation's architecture, especially that which had been produced in its most interesting, unique and romantic period of the middle ages. His love of the past, hatred of the present and hope that the future might be more like the past fuelled his convictions to protect the nation's architectural treasures. His well documented belief that a building told a tale of its builders and the society in which it was built was very real and heartfelt. The didactic function served by an old building was not only a link to the past, but also evidence of greater purpose achieved through the dignity of art and craftsmanship. The fracture with traditional craft

and work that was brought on by the Industrial Revolution certainly played its part in Morris' grim world view. The fact that the Anglican Church took part in this charade by sacrificing authenticity to replace it with manufactured fakes was simply a perfect issue to rise up against. It is a well accepted fact that Morris was a utopian thinker and his desire to share his idealized vision of the middle ages with future generations by protecting its architecture certainly was a noble undertaking.

Appendix I

Manifesto of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB)

By William Morris

A Society coming before the public with such a name as that above written must needs explain how, and why, it proposes to protect those ancient buildings which, to most people doubtless, seem to have so many and such excellent protectors. This, then, is the explanation we offer.

No doubt within the last fifty years a new interest, almost like another sense, has arisen in these ancient monuments of art; and they have become the subject of one of the most interesting of studies, and of an enthusiasm, religious, historical, artistic, which is one of the undoubted gains of our time; yet we think that if the present treatment of them be continued, our descendants will find them useless for study and chilling to enthusiasm. We think that those last fifty years of knowledge and attention have done more for their destruction than all the foregoing centuries of revolution, violence, and contempt.

For Architecture, long decaying, died out, as a popular art at least, just as the knowledge of medieval art was born. So that the civilised world of the nineteenth century has no style of its own amidst its wide knowledge of the styles of other centuries. From this lack and this gain arose in men's minds the strange idea of the Restoration of ancient buildings; and a strange and most fatal idea, which by its very name implies that it is possible to strip from a building this, that, and the other part of history - of its life that is - and then to stay the hand at some arbitrary point, and leave it still historical, living, and even as it once was.

In early times this kind of forgery was impossible, because knowledge failed the builders, or perhaps because instinct held them back. If repairs were needed, if ambition or piety pricked on to change, that change was of necessity wrought in the unmistakable fashion of the time; a church of the eleventh century might be added to or altered in the twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, or even the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, but every change, whatever history it destroyed, left history in the gap, and was alive with the spirit of the deeds done midst its fashioning. The result of all this was often a building in which the many changes, though harsh and visible enough, were, by their very contrast, interesting and instructive and could by no possibility mislead. But those who make the changes wrought in our day under the name of Restoration, while professing to bring back a building to the best time of its history, have no guide but each his own

individual whim to point out to them what is admirable and what contemptible; while the very nature of their task compels them to destroy something and to supply the gap by imagining what the earlier builders should or might have done. Moreover, in the course of this double process of destruction and addition the whole surface of the building is necessarily tampered with; so that the appearance of antiquity is taken away from such old parts of the fabric as are left, and there is no laying to rest in the spectator the suspicion of what may have been lost; and in short, a feeble and lifeless forgery is the final result of all the wasted labour.

It is sad to say, that in this manner most of the bigger Minsters, and a vast number of more humble buildings, both in England and on the Continent, have been dealt with by men of talent often, and worthy of better employment, but deaf to the claims of poetry and history in the highest sense of the words.

For what is left we plead before our architects themselves, before the official guardians of buildings, and before the public generally, and we pray them to remember how much is gone of the religion, thought and manners of time past, never by almost universal consent, to be Restored; and to consider whether it be possible to Restore those buildings, the living spirit of which, it cannot be too often repeated, was an inseparable part of that religion and thought, and those past manners. For our part we assure them fearlessly, that of all the Restorations yet undertaken the worst have meant the reckless stripping [from] a building of some of its most interesting material features; while the best have their exact analogy in the Restoration of an old picture, where the partly-perished work of the ancient craftsman has been made neat and smooth by the tricky hand of some unoriginal and thoughtless hack of today. If, for the rest, it be asked us to specify what kind of amount of art, style, or other interest in a building, makes it worth protecting, we answer, anything which can be looked on as artistic, picturesque, historical, antique, or substantial: any work in short, over which educated, artistic people would think it worthwhile to argue at all.

It is for all these buildings, therefore, of all times and styles, that we plead, and call upon those who have to deal with them to put Protection in the place of Restoration, to stave off decay by daily care, to prop a perilous wall or mend a leaky roof by such means as are obviously meant for support or covering, and show no pretence of other art, and otherwise to resist all tampering with either the fabric or ornament of the building as it stands; if it has become inconvenient for its present use, to raise another building rather than alter or enlarge the old one; in fine to treat our ancient buildings as monuments of a bygone art, created by bygone manners, that modern art cannot meddle with without destroying.

Thus, and thus only, shall we escape the reproach of our learning being turned into a snare to us; thus, and thus only can we protect our ancient buildings, and hand them down instructive and venerable to those that come after us.

1877

Appendix II

Tewkesbury Minster

By William Morris

My eye just now caught the word 'restoration' in the morning paper, and, on looking closer, I saw that this time it is nothing less than the Minster of Tewkesbury that is to be destroyed by Sir Gilbert Scott. Is it altogether too late to do something to save it - it and whatever else beautiful or historical is still left us on the sites of the ancient buildings we were once so famous for? Would it not be of some use once for all, and with the least delay possible, to set on foot an association for the purpose of watching over and protecting these relics, which, scanty as they are now become, are still wonderful treasures, all the more priceless in this age of the world, when the newly-invented study of living history is the chief joy of so many of our lives?

Your paper has so steadily and courageously opposed itself to those acts of barbarism which the modern architect, parson, and squire call 'restoration,' that it would be waste of words to enlarge here on the ruin that has been wrought by their hands; but, for the saving of what is left, I think I may write a word of encouragement, and say that you by no means stand alone in the matter, and that there are many thoughtful people who would be glad to sacrifice time, money, and comfort in defence of those ancient monuments: besides, though I admit that the architects are, with very few exceptions, hopeless, because interest, habit, and ignorance bind them, and that the clergy are hopeless, because their order, habit, and an ignorance yet grosser, bind them; still there must be many people whose ignorance is accidental rather than inveterate, whose good sense could surely be touched if it were clearly put to them that they were destroying what they, or, more surely still, their sons and sons' sons, would one day fervently long for, and which no wealth or energy could ever buy again for them.

What I wish for, therefore, is that an association should be set on foot to keep a watch on old monuments, to protest against all 'restoration' that means more than keeping out wind and weather, and, by all means, literary and other, to awaken a feeling that our ancient buildings are not mere ecclesiastical toys, but sacred monuments of the nation's growth and hope.

Letter to *Athenaeum*, 10 March 1877.

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