JOHN EVERETT MILLAIS'S CHRIST IN
THE HOUSE OF HIS PARENTS, A PRE-
RAPHAELITE RELIGIOUS IMAGE IN THE
ROYAL ACADEMY EXHIBITION OF 1850

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ABSTRACT

In 1850, John Everett Millais showed an untitled depiction of the Holy Family in London's Royal Academy Exhibition. This investigation focusses upon Millais's work, which was subsequently titled *Christ in the House of his Parents*, and upon the largely negative response of the ten journals which reviewed it.

Millais belonged to a group called the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which, discontented with the idealized High Renaissance style favoured by the Academy, attempted to create a new form of art. Central to this endeavour, and characteristic of *Christ in the House of his Parents*, was a medievalizing style and a minutely detailed naturalism.

It is most likely that Millais hoped his work would be well-received, since both medievalism and naturalism were already established in the English art world. Naturalism appealed mainly to middle-class art patrons, and medievalism, too, had found a public.

Where Millais did deviate from the norm was in combining naturalism and medievalism with religious subject matter, and here he made a crucial error, insofar as pleasing his public was concerned. While dissatisfaction with Academic art was widespread,
particularly among the middle classes, this was superseded, when religious imagery was involved, by a firm loyalty to Academic idealizing conventions.

As a result, Millais's particularized figures were perceived as ugly, and some journals even linked them with the urban poor. Ultimately, this response was tied to their fear of the poor, and to their rejection of the liberal haute bourgeois philosophy which had originally shaped the Poor Laws, in 1834.

Millais's medievalism was widely held to be antithetical to progress. Critics from all positions on the class and political spectrum hastened to assert their belief in progress, whether in the arts or in the sciences, and to castigate Millais for the apparent retrogressiveness of his picture.

Only one journal, The Guardian, departed from the above pattern and expressed approval for the work. Significantly, it did not equate medievalism with retrogression, and it had no fear of the poor to be activated by Millais's particularized figures. Nonetheless, it experienced difficulty with the painting's naturalism, since, like the hostile periodicals, it too subscribed to the idealizing conventions of the Academy.

Ironically, it was only when Millais finally abandoned his medievalism, and avoided religious subject matter entirely,
that he began to experience some of the critical and popular acclaim which he evidently hoped would be accorded to Christ in the House of his Parents.
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INTRODUCTION

England in 1850 manifested nothing resembling the social unrest which had swept through it; and through the continent, only two years previously. In the arts, however, it experienced a controversy marked by such intensity as to set 1850 apart in the history of nineteenth-century English art. The object responsible for provoking this was an untitled painting which depicted the Holy Family at work in St. Joseph's carpentry shop. The image, which was shown at the Royal Academy's annual summer exhibition in London, and which is now known as Christ in the House of his Parents, (fig. 1), was the work of John Everett Millais, a former Academy student and member of a small group called the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which consisted largely of art students.1

Pre-Raphaelitism, which is obviously of great importance in connection with Christ in the House of his Parents, has intrigued art historians, as has the production and reception of the picture itself, and this interest has generated a number of articles dealing with the area. Perhaps the best of these is Alan Bowness's "Art and Society in England and France in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: Two Paintings Before the Public,"2 which is generally strongest in its analysis of the symbolic content of the work. Bowness, synthesizing information originally given in William Michael Rossetti's PRB Journal, explains how the painting, which illustrates an
imagined episode from the childhood of Christ, is to be understood as a reference to the Crucifixion. Christ, attempting to aid St. Joseph in the construction of a door which lies upon the workbench, has inadvertently gouged his palm upon a nail instead, and the resultant wound in his hand is an obvious allusion to those of the Crucifixion.

Bowness's argument is weakest in its explanation of "why everybody was so upset" with Christ in the House of his Parents. He does isolate the two key objections to Millais's work which most often appeared in the columns of the ten journals which reviewed it. These were: that stylistic references made by Millais to fifteenth century art were unacceptable because such prototypes were themselves filled with imperfections; and, that the figures were ugly, or deformed, because they appeared to be nothing more than a collection of the poorest and most unsightly slum dwellers in modern London.

However, while Bowness points out important issues, he does not fully understand what they signified in 1850, and as a result, is at a loss to assess them. For example, he quite correctly writes that some of the critics associated Millais's medievalizing style with Roman Catholicism, which they strongly disliked, and that therefore this antipathy towards Catholicism was responsible for their anti-medievalizing stance. Beyond this
point Bowness fails to penetrate, and the crucial questions of why a "Roman Catholic" style should be found offensive in a country which had been Protestant for centuries, and what, in fact, Catholicism itself meant to English society at mid-century, are not addressed.

Edward Morris's article, "The Subject of Millais's Christ in the House of his Parents," is narrower in its scope than that of Bowness, as Morris confines himself strictly to theological concerns. He comments that the iconography of the painting must be closely studied, but he fails to do so, and almost ignores the work itself. In addition, he neglects to examine the content of the criticism, preferring instead to scrutinize the theological sources for Christ in the House of his Parents. This portion of his article is quite useful in that it identifies an important element involved in the genesis of the painting. Morris shows that the theological orientation of Christ in the House of his Parents derived from Anglo-Catholicism, a small Anglican sect in which Millais and many of the other Pre-Raphaelites were keenly interested, and claims that the picture's Anglo-Catholic theology was responsible for its negative reception. This, however, is highly unlikely, because the critics, who were not theologians, were neither aware of nor interested in the Anglo-Catholic theological points pertaining to Christ in the House of his Parents. They failed even to discuss these issues, and their comments make it clear that for them Christ in the House of his Parents evoked concerns for things other than the fine points of Anglo-Catholic theology.
Morris's central problem, which is shared by Bowness, is a failure to examine the historical circumstances in which Christ in the House of his Parents was produced. Therefore, when these scholars attempt to explain any of the elements pertaining to the painting, whether medievalism, poverty, or Anglo-Catholicism, their conclusions are distorted and idiosyncratic because they are not shaped by an awareness of what these subjects represented in 1850.

Lindsay Errington’s Social and Religious Themes in English Art, 1840-1860, partially remedies the defects apparent in the work of Morris and Bowness. Errington carefully examines the iconography of the painting, and her discussion of the critical reaction to medievalism, and of medievalism in general is particularly perceptive. Here, she points out that medievalism was viewed by those who disliked it as an emblem of social oppression and superstition, and that it was perceived as antithetical to science and to progress.

Unfortunately, Errington's strength is also her weakness, in that she experiences great difficulties with the picture itself, (which she seems to dislike), and with Millais's purpose in painting it, because she sees it almost entirely in terms of its revivalism. She writes that it was "reality as it appeared to the fifteenth, not to the nineteenth century that [Millais] hankered after;" and, because she seems to have lost sight of the fact that Christ in the House of his Parents is a nineteenth century picture, which
was directed to a nineteenth century public, is ultimately unable to explain its modern elements. Finally she concludes, rather unsatisfactorily, that Millais was "confused" in connection with the work, but she grants it a "warped authenticity" of its own, (which she does not explain), and moves on to a detailed discussion of Anglo-Catholicism.

Despite their strengths, especially in the areas of iconography, medievalism, Anglo-Catholicism, and the genesis of Christ in the House of his Parents, the literature surveyed above leaves a number of basic points concerning the production and reception of Christ in the House of his Parents either wholly or partially unexplored. Firstly, if we are to reach a fuller understanding, the work itself needs to be examined in more detail, as do the concerns of Millais himself, coupled with the nature and aspirations of Pre-Raphaelitism. In addition, Christ in the House of his Parents existed within an established genre, that of religious imagery, and this must be discussed in order to ascertain the social role normally played by such works. Lastly, the critical response, with its two key issues of medievalism and poverty, needs to be carefully scrutinized and linked with the historical circumstances surrounding it.

As much as possible, this approach seeks to clarify how and why Christ in the House of his Parents functioned as it did in 1850. It is grounded in the belief that a painting, or any piece
of art, speaks to and is part of a specific moment in time, and
that, far from holding a single and eternal significance, it is
interpreted in different ways from generation to generation, until
what it originally represented may become lost or distorted.
Only by attempting to reconstruct the missing pieces of this
historical framework will we begin to understand Christ in the
House of his Parents, which is among the most important of Pre-
Raphaelite images.
FOOTNOTES

1Two other Pre-Raphaelite religious images were exhibited in 1850. These were: Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Ecce Ancilla Domini!, a painting of the Annunciation, which was shown at the National Institution; and, William Holman Hunt's A Converted British Family Sheltering a Christian Priest from the Persecution of the Druids, which appeared at the Royal Academy. Like Christ in the House of his Parents, these were attacked by the press, but Millais's work received the most attention. For a complete list of the criticism, see Appendix A.


3Bowness, Transactions, vol. 22 (1972), page 126.

4The nail is just to the left of the Virgin. Millais's source for this event is unknown.

5Bowness, Transactions, vol. 22 (1972), page 122.


8The Builder, Household Words, Punch, and Tait's Edinburgh Magazine.

9Bowness, Transactions, vol. 22 (1972), page 127.


Errington, Social, pages 260-264.

Ibid., page 47.

Ibid., page 34.

Ibid., page 18.

Ibid., page 247.

Ibid., page 246.

Ibid., page 247.
CHAPTER I: THE GENESIS OF CHRIST IN THE HOUSE OF HIS PARENTS

In 1848, John Everett Millais and five other young artists: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Holman Hunt, James Collinson, Frederick George Stephens, and Thomas Woolner, as well as an art critic called William Michael Rossetti, formed a group which they titled the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Accordingly, they signed some of their works with the initials "PRB," but agreed to keep both the significance of this and the group's existence a secret. Although an anomalous body of divergent personalities and varying degrees of artistic ability, the Pre-Raphaelites were unified in a shared discontent with art as it was taught by the Royal Academy, and by a desire to develop a new type of art to take its place.

Academic art, in which all the Pre-Raphaelite artists had been trained, still favoured the conventions of the grand style. This was rooted in the works of the High Renaissance and classical Greece, and had been instilled in the Royal Academy during the eighteenth century by Joshua Reynolds, its first president. Subjects associated with the grand style were heroic; and figures were idealized according to the classical stereotype. Stylistically, its "presiding principle," as Reynolds put it, was a generalizing approach which was to transcend the fleeting nature of "local customs, particularities, and details of every kind," in order to produce the type of art which would "live for ever."
The Pre-Raphaelites' impatience with the conventions of the Royal Academy was not wholly confined to the Brotherhood itself. In fact, it was quite widespread, especially among the middle classes, who had been complaining about Academic art since at least the early 1830's. As *The Art Journal* put it, "the unpopularity of the Royal Academy is...notorious. The people...feel no sympathy and take no interest [in it]." The critic continued to say that the academicians were themselves at fault for this because they had "repelled all idea of change."

While *The Art Journal* did not elaborate upon the nature of this change, it is not difficult to explain such a marked lack of sympathy with the Royal Academy. *The Art Journal*'s "people," were, of course, the middle classes, (no one conceived of the working classes as buyers of art), who identified both the Academy and its art with aristocratic taste. The middle classes, which by 1850 had attained a substantial measure of political influence in Great Britain, chaffed at institutions like the Academy which still exhibited the symbols of aristocratic privilege. Not unexpectedly, they wanted such institutions to correspond more closely with their own aspirations and tastes. Therefore, the dissatisfaction of the Pre-Raphaelites existed within the larger context of middle-class discontent with the Royal Academy and its art.

As suggested by their chosen sobriquet of "Pre-Raphaelite,"
part of the group's rejection of the Renaissance conventions which dominated the Academy involved a preference for the Flemish and Italian painters who had preceded Raphael. The Pre-Raphaelites adopted identifiable quattrocento traits in their own paintings, such as flatness, non-linear perspective, and angular or awkward postures.

Stylistically, Christ in the House of his Parents conforms to the Brotherhood's revival of medieval traditions. In this case, Millais borrowed from fifteenth century Flemish art, as exemplified by the works of painters such as Robert Campin, Rogier van der Weyden, and the Van Eycks. Perhaps the most immediately apparent correspondence between Christ in the House of his Parents and Flemish art can be perceived in Millais's adoption of the Flemish characteristic of tilting objects forward toward the viewer. Examples of this exist in The Merode Altarpiece, a work by Flemish artist Robert Campin, (Fig. 2), in which the floor rises steeply as it recedes into the background, while the table and the bench tip dramatically forward. Because the floor is not level, the Virgin and the Annunciate angel seem to perch precariously upon it, threatening, along with the impossibly balanced furniture, to tumble into the viewer's space. As in The Merode Altarpiece, objects in Christ in the House of his Parents are turned forward, although in a much less pronounced way. The floor has a gentle upward tilt, which is most evident at the right and the left sides of the painting, while the door laid upon the
workbench is quite obviously tipped toward the viewer. The sensation
of levitation is most apparent in the apprentice, and also in St.
John the Baptist, who do not seem firmly anchored to the ground.\textsuperscript{14}

Flemish paintings characteristically featured cramped interiors, in which the articulation of space is such that the
figures and objects do not appear to have enough room. This
approach is recalled by \textit{Christ in the House of his Parents}, in
which the six figures and large workbench have been crowded into
a space which is too small to hold them comfortably. The sense of
claustrophobia produced by the incongruities in the relationship of
objects to space is heightened by the fact that carpentry, sewing,
and basket-weaving must each be accomplished in this very small in­
terior.

In 1850, the Flemish models for \textit{Christ in the House of his Parents} were perceived as belonging to the medieval period,
since the date for the beginning of the Renaissance was popularly
placed at approximately 1500.\textsuperscript{15} Not surprisingly, contemporary
critics viewed Millais's picture as a medievalist work.\textsuperscript{16}

The Pre-Raphaelites did not conceive of themselves as
medieval revivalists per se,\textsuperscript{17} and they strongly differentiated
between their aims and those of other artists whose intent seemed
to lie solely in "a slavish imitation of the quattrocentists."\textsuperscript{18}
As William Michael Rossetti put it, "Pre-Raphaelites truly they are--but of the nineteenth century," and accordingly, while they borrowed various elements from quattrocento art, these were re-worked to suit their own needs.

The point behind the Pre-Raphaelites' choice of stylistic inspiration was a desire to produce images characterized by the spirit of "earnestness" and "truth" which the Brotherhood recognized in quattrocento art. In Pre-Raphaelite thought, fifteenth century painters had been able to execute such admirable works because they had closely studied nature, unencumbered by the very artistic conventions which the Brotherhood were themselves struggling to shake off.

Neither an interest in medieval art, nor a desire to revive it were new developments in 1850. Antiquarian interest in the middle ages had existed in England since the seventeenth century, and Gothic elements had begun appearing in domestic architecture during the eighteenth century.

From the late eighteenth century, however, medievalism entered a new phase, involving, among other things, an ecclesiastical revival of the Gothic style, which manifested itself in the production of religious paintings and of quantities of medievalizing churches. Painters such as William Dyce, John Rogers Herbert, and
W.C.T. Dobson had incorporated medieval qualities into their own works before the Brotherhood began to do so, although their archaisms were not nearly as pronounced as those of the Pre-Raphaelites.

Despite the fact that medievalism was fairly well-established in nineteenth century art, the Pre-Raphaelites' use of it had provoked some unfriendly criticism in 1849, especially in the case of Isabella, Millais's submission of that year. Although the reviews on the whole were positive, Millais appears to have taken some of the criticism of his medievalism to heart, and while he did not actually abandon it until 1852, a comparison of the preparatory sketch for Christ in the House of his Parents and the finished version reveals a reworking of its medievalizing elements. The medieval anachronisms in the sketch are very prominent. (Fig. 3). Postures are angular, figures attenuated, space is markedly claustrophobic, and the vanishing points have been lifted up and out of the picture. By contrast, figural attenuation and angularity of pose have been decreased in the finished painting. Bodies are fleshed out, and stand in more natural positions. Space is less cluttered and relatively larger, and the perspective has been restructured so that objects recede into the background in a more naturalistic manner. Essentially, the strong medievalizing aspects of the sketch have been diminished or softened in the final version, perhaps in an attempt to forestall the
negative comments of the anti-medievalizing press.

Associated with such hostility was the fact that in 1850, medievalism had acquired a political significance, and was commonly identified with the Tory party's Young England movement,26 and with Anglo-Catholicism. Strongly conservative, and closely linked with the aristocratic and clerical status quo,27 these groups conceived of the medieval period as a golden age, in which prosperity, spirituality, and social harmony had been the direct results of upper class and Church hegemony in England. As employed by these movements, artistic medievalism corresponded to a profound admiration for the vanished social perfection of the middle ages, as well as a desire to revive various aspects of it for modern usage. Therefore, while the Pre-Raphaelites employed medievalism as part of their search for artistic "truth," and certainly not for the same ends that these groups did, the fact remains that the Brotherhood was borrowing from a tradition which, in the minds of many, was already linked with political conservatism.

In their pursuit of medieval "truth," the Pre-Raphaelites refused to generalize their figures in accordance with the idealizing approach favoured by the Royal Academy. John Tupper, writing for The Germ, (the Pre-Raphaelites' magazine), commented that "the antique, however successfully it may have wrought, is not our model,"28 while William Michael Rossetti insisted that "loveliness
can be English as well as Hellenic," in spite of academic "axioms" to the contrary. 29 In place of the Academy's classical ideal, the Pre-Raphaelites emphasized the close observation of nature. Regarding this, W.M. Rossetti stated that, "what [the Pre-Raphaelites] saw, that they would paint--all of it, and all fully; and what they did not see they would try to do without." 30

The desire to paint what they saw led to an intense naturalism. The Brotherhood painstakingly reproduced the features of their models with such "scrupulous fidelity," 31 that the figures in a typical Pre-Raphaelite work are a collection of portraits. Christ in the House of his Parents was no exception to this rule. Every figure in it is a portrait of a Millais family member, or of one of their friends. 32

As much as possible, everything was painted from life, and as correctly as possible, so as to produce a work characterized by "truth" and "sincerity." 33 The interior for Christ in the House of his Parents, with its well-used tools and workbench, was taken from a real carpenter's shop in London. The carpenter himself modelled for the body of St. Joseph, because, according to Millais, this was "the only way to get the development of the muscles right." 34 Accordingly, each vein and sinew in St. Joseph's wiry arms is clearly articulated.
In conformity with the biblical account, and probably in the interests of historical accuracy, Millais depicted his Holy Family as common tradespeople, dressing them in plain, thin cloth, and placing them in an austere interior consisting of rough planking and packed earth. They are engaged in one of the aspects of St. Joseph's trade.

In taking this approach, Millais was following a tradition already established in the history of art, which had also appeared in contemporary English painting. Only three years previously, a work by John Rogers Herbert, entitled *Our Saviour Subject to his Parents at Nazareth*, which depicted the Holy Family at work, had been displayed at the Royal Academy. (Fig. 6).

Millais's interest in historical accuracy and in naturalism was widely shared by middle-class patrons of art, in preference to what they perceived as the aristocratically-oriented grand style favoured by the Royal Academy. Wilkie Collins, a friend of the Pre-Raphaelites, described both the attitudes and the taste of these relatively new middle-class participants in the art market, with:

> Traders and makers of all kinds of commodities . . . started with the new notion of buying a picture which they themselves could admire. . . . These rough and ready customers were not to be led by rules or frightened by precedent. . . . They saw that trees were green in nature, and brown in the Old Masters, and they thought
the latter colour not an improvement on the former—and said so. They wanted interesting subjects; variety, resemblance to nature; genuineness of the article, and fresh paint; they had no ancestors whose feelings as founders of galleries it was necessary to consult; . . . so they turned their backs valiently on the Old Masters, and marched off in a body to the living men. 36

On these grounds, it is quite likely that Millais hoped the fresh, glowing colours of *Christ in the House of his Parents*, as well as its historical and stylistic verisimilitude, would satisfy the taste of such middle-class visitors to the Royal Academy.37

While naturalism was a relatively recent development in Millais's work, he, as well as Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Holman Hunt, had each depicted religious themes prior to the formation of the Brotherhood.38 Nonetheless, the question remains as to why they considered religious subject matter particularly appropriate for Pre-Raphaelitism. Pre-Raphaelitism was characterized by a marked emphasis upon virtue, and by a desire to produce distinctively moral works of art. Adopting the high-minded tone typical of the Brotherhood's attitude towards painting, F.G. Stephens commented that "the Arts have always been most important moral guides,"39 and that "the good which may be wrought by their influence [has] . . . no assignable limit."40 Given this linking of art with morality, it is likely that the Pre-Raphaelites turned to religious material in the belief that it was the most legitimate vehicle through which
to express the highest moral content.

As implied by Stephens's usage of the words "guide" and "influence," the role of such ethically pure art was didactic. Stephens wrote that "the true spirit in which all study should be conducted [was to]. . . chaste and render pure, the humanity it was instructed to elevate."41 John Tupper, writing for The Germ, reinforced Stephens's idea in explaining how this was to be accomplished.

Art, in its most exalted character, addresses pre-eminently the highest attributes of man, viz: his mental and his moral faculties. . . [It should] excite his rational and benevolent powers. . . and, the writer would add, man's religious aspirations. 42

Tupper differentiated between such moral and intellectual art, and "'Low Art,' or Art in its less exalted character. . . which addresses the less exalted attributes of man, viz: his mere sensory faculties,"43 and he listed the various topics which would elevate both painting and viewer above the realm of the senses. "Religious subjects"44 were included in the catalogue of acceptable thematic material.

The Pre-Raphaelite stipulations concerning morality were also applied to the character of the artist himself. He was to be as virtuous, or, as Stephens put it, as "pure" of "heart" as his works.45 Painters who failed to retain their purity would also lose their "high seat" as artists, and would "fall from the priest
to the mere parasite, from the law-giver to the mere courtier." While it is unlikely that Stephens expected his image of the artist as priest or Mosaic law-giver to be taken literally, his vocabulary, which imbues both art and artists with a quasi-religious identity, clearly shows that the Pre-Raphaelites' concept of themselves as moral artists was heavily loaded with religious associations.

Ultimately, a great deal of Pre-Raphaelite art theory originated in that of the Royal Academy, despite the fact that much of the Brotherhood's raison d'être was based in a dissatisfaction with Academic conventions. Like the Pre-Raphaelites, the Academy distinguished between high and low art, and it too reserved primacy of place for history painting, the genre in which religious imagery was included, because of the morally didactic role played by this type of art. The major difference between Pre-Raphaelitism and the Academy lay in the area of artistic style, as, according to academic thought, the detailed naturalism employed by the Brotherhood was appropriate only in low genres, such as landscape, or pictures of animals.

Therefore, in addition to facilitating the production of art of the highest moral calibre, the incorporation of the Pre-Raphaelite style into canvases of religious subject matter also afforded an excellent opportunity of reforming Academic stylistic conventions. This was intimated in an 1852 discussion of
Pre-Raphaelitism, in which critic David Masson commented that the Brotherhood;

insisted more upon the necessity of strict truth in reference to the finer kinds of artistic study. . .because conventionality had here more firmly seated itself, and effected a wider divorce between Art and Nature. 48

Given the high rank held by history painting, it is likely that Massons's allusion to the "finer kinds" of art was made with it in mind.

In light of the Pre-Raphaelites' discontent with the artistic style in vogue at the Academy, it is not surprising that they objected when such stylistic traditions appeared in the religious art shown at the annual exhibitions. William Michael Rossetti reviewed the 1850 show for The Critic, a literary magazine, and, as the following discussion reveals, his evaluation of the religious imagery displayed there was far from complimentary. Most of his comments centred upon stylistic concerns. In examining G.F. Watts's The Good Samaritan, (Fig. 9), Rossetti protested regarding its unnatural colour, asking sarcastically whether the "jaundiced" condition of its "yellow, bilious-looking subjects" had prompted the artist to conclude "that the surrounding objects, --the sky and [the figures] themselves. . .should be painted of the colour seen by them."49 Frederick R. Pickersgill's Samson Betrayed, (Fig. 10), was dismissed as a "melancholy" example of the "prettiness and trick" into which this artist had fallen since becoming an
associate Academician. Virtuous Pre-Raphaelite that he was, Rossetti also took exception to the two women at the right of Pickersgill's work, whose ostensible purpose, according to Rossetti, was to produce a "feeling of suspense," but whose actual function was "to wind themselves into the unattainable of nymphlike waviness," reminiscent of the erotic nudes of Frost and Etty.50

Charles Eastlake's *The Good Samaritan*, (Fig. 11), was treated with extreme reticence, in that beyond praising the "intention in the typification of the Saviour as the Good Samaritan," Rossetti pointedly informed his readers that he would "not discuss" the work.51 Later, in the course of his strongly negative assessment of Eastlake's imitators such as "the curiously puny and servile" Dobson,52 Rossetti attacked the image indirectly by claiming that the pictures produced by Eastlake's followers were "not greatly inferior to *The Good Samaritan* of their prototype."53

An exception in Rossetti's hostility towards the religious imagery shown at the Academy appeared in his discussion of William Dyce, whose "delightful" *Meeting of Jacob and Rachel*, (Fig. 12), was the judged the most "thoroughly satisfactory...picture in the exhibition."54 Dyce, generally sympathetic to the aims of the Brotherhood, was also interested in revivalism. He shared their interest in Anglo-Catholicism, as well as their wish to produce religious imagery. Because of this, Rossetti's approval of Jacob
and Rachel is not hard to understand. On the whole, however, he remained highly critical of the other religious images at the Exhibition.

Rossetti also discussed Christ in the House of his Parents in his review, focussing upon its highly moral properties, so prized by the Brotherhood. He pointed out that its "noble and eminently. . .sacred purpose" was expressed through the behaviour of the Holy Family. Jesus, wrote Rossetti;

- has wounded His hand with a nail, [and]. . .
- He kisses and comforts. . .His mother [who]
- kneels to bind up the hurt. . .The infant St.
- John the Baptist advances with a bowl of water;
- he who will in future time baptize into His ministry of suffering. . .The picture tells
- thus, . . .of Jesus, suffering and consoling;
- of the Blessed Virgin, loving and serving;
- [and] of the Baptist ministering. . .Is the idea unworthy?  55

Obviously, Rossetti's summation of the interaction between the members of the Holy Family is phrased in terms of their role as paradigms of the highest moral qualities.

In addition to its stress upon virtue, Christ in the House of his Parents places a strong emphasis upon the blood of Christ. Millais achieved this by structuring his picture so that the viewer is continually directed back to Christ's bleeding palm. Christ stands in the middle of the picture, his wounded hand lifted for
all to see, and, due to his centrality and the fact that all the orthogonals in the painting lead towards its centre, attention is immediately caught by his face and gesture. There is virtually no movement in the work to detract from its central scene; the figures are immobile, as in a tableau vivant, eternally frozen into their strained positions. Once our eye moves away from Christ, we instantly encounter a figure, whose pose and gaze sends us back to him, and whose simple physical presence blocks us from penetrating further into the background. The screen-like role played by the Holy Family is reiterated by the carpenter's bench and the uncompromisingly flat and solid wooden wall behind it, both of which act to push the attention back into the foreground, and to Christ. Although we can eventually escape into the landscape at the left, or the small room at the right, these areas contain little of visual interest, and even here we are impeded, by a plaster wall at the right, and by the intently staring sheep, (symbols of the Christian "flock"), who, like the Holy Family, direct their gazes inward. Repeatedly, and inescapably, we are forced back to Christ, and to his bleeding hand.

This continual contemplation of the wound is, of course, actually a meditation upon the Crucifixion, since the young Christ's injury obviously refers to his ultimate fate. Allusions to the Crucifixion appear in the cross above Christ's head, in the splash of blood which has fallen to the arch of his left foot, and in the presence of ladder, hammers, pincers, and nails; all instruments
which would normally be found in a carpentry shop, but which are also specifically associated with the Passion.

The theological significance of Christ in the House of his Parents is further clarified by the presence of the door upon the workbench. In the Gospel of St. John, Christ speaks of himself as "the door," and comments that, "if anyone enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. . .I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." Christ's act of "laying down his life for the sheep," prefigured in Christ in the House of his Parents by the injured palm, is the "door" to salvation. The viewer is always directed back to Christ's wound because it, or more specifically, the atonement for sin entailed within it, is the "door" through which all must first pass in order to be saved.

This kind of symbolism is typological. That is, Millais depicts a legendary event, (the accident in the carpenter's shop), which assumes meaning only if it is understood as a prefigurative reference to a later occurrence (the Crucifixion). Nineteenth century Christianity contains numerous examples of the typological approach to religious subjects. It was employed by both Evangelical and High Church Anglicans, as well as by some Dissenting bodies, most normally as a tool with which to give the Old Testament relevance for Christians. Through typology, even the most arcane
passages in the Old Testament could be invested with contemporary significance, once they were presented as disguised references to the New.

Although most of Millais's typological references are contained within the time period of the life of Christ, so as to link Christ's childhood with his adult mission, Christ in the House of his Parents does include the more common kind of typology in which the Old Testament was made to allude to the New.

Millais employed a verse from the Old Testament as his title for the picture. The verse, Zechariah 13:6, reads, "And one shall say unto him, 'What are these wounds in thine hands?' Then he shall answer, 'Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.'" In applying Zechariah 13:6 to Christ in the House of his Parents, Millais made the scripture act as a type for the events portrayed in his work: the "wounds" mentioned by Zechariah become that in the young Christ's palm; the "house" corresponds to the carpentry shop in which the wounding takes place; and the "friends" are the members of the Holy Family. He who "answers" is, of course, Christ himself. Ultimately, according to this reading, all of Zechariah 13:6 refers to the wound suffered by Christ as a young child, and, by implication, to those of the Crucifixion.

While employing the typological method common to many
religious organizations in England, Millais's particular interpretation of Zechariah 13:6 originated with a specific group within the Anglican Church. These were the Anglo-Catholics, who alone held that Zechariah 13:6 alluded to Christ.

Millais's conversion to Anglo-Catholicism, short-lived though evidently sincere, is fairly well documented. In London, he frequently attended an Anglo-Catholic church, and during his working vacations in Oxford, he stayed with the Combes, an Anglo-Catholic couple. His letters to them often refer to specifically Anglo-Catholic concerns.

According to Hunt, the original idea for *Christ in the House of his Parents* came from a sermon Millais had heard at Oxford in the summer of 1849, which took Zechariah 13:6 as its central text. In light of Millais's connection with Anglo-Catholicism, it is likely that Hunt's account, though written long after the fact, is correct.

Oxford was the traditional headquarters of the Anglo-Catholic movement; the sermon Millais heard there must have been delivered by an Anglo-Catholic minister. Perhaps it was even given by Edward Bouverie Pusey, who taught and preached in the city, and who, during the 1840's, was perhaps the best-known Anglo-Catholic theologian. Anyone with an interest in the sect would have
made a point of attending his sermons. However, the presence of Zechariah 13:6 indicates that Anglo-Catholicism was clearly involved in the genesis of Christ in the House of his Parents, regardless of who actually delivered the sermon.

As previously mentioned, Anglo-Catholicism stood for strongly conservative values, and as a result, it remained at the centre of controversy throughout its history. While neither Millais nor the other Pre-Raphaelites could have been unaware of Anglo-Catholicism's political nature, it is unlikely that this aspect of it was responsible for their interest in the sect.

Perhaps the most obvious point of contact between the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and Anglo-Catholicism lay in a shared fascination with the medieval period. Like the Brotherhood, Anglo-Catholics identified the middle ages with a spirit of purity conspicuously absent from modern times, and, in an approach much like that of Pre-Raphaelitism, Anglo-Catholics everywhere revived aspects of medieval culture. Gothic art and architecture, as well as ancient religious ritual were resuscitated in an attempt to instill a mystical aura of medieval spirituality in contemporary worship. Therefore, as far as medievalism was concerned, Anglo-Catholicism must have seemed particularly attractive to the Brotherhood, even though the Pre-Raphaelites employed it as part of their
reforming approach to the arts, and not for the politically con­
servative ends which characterized the Anglican movement.

That Millais himself was drawn to the medievalizing ser­
VICES offered by Anglo-Catholicism was clearly expressed in one of
his letters to Mrs. Combe. In a discussion of the Ango-Catholic
church he often attended, Millais commented approvingly that "the
service there is better performed than any...in Oxford or Cam­
bridge." The church in question, Gothic revival St. Andrew's,
Wells Street, was known for the grandeur of its services.

Millais's interest in the impressive nature of Anglo-
Catholic services was shared by many Anglicans, who felt a dissat­
isfaction with the existing forms of Church of England worship.
It is vital to recognize that the Anglo-Catholic changes in the
church service were not made simply for the purposes of show, nor
were they received as such by Anglican congregations. Instead,
every aspect of the new ritual was to be understood as the symbol
of a major theological point, and as such, ritual assumed great
importance for church-goers, because it was an unmistakeable indi­
cator of the theological orientation of any particular church.

Perhaps, as in the case of other Anglicans, Millais's
interest in the medievalizing services of the Anglo-Catholic move­
ment originated in an appreciative awareness that such ritual
corresponded to the fresh theological truths which the sect had brought to the Church of England. Given that Millais himself was currently involved in an attempt to produce a new and more truthful religious imagery of his own, the incorporation of Anglo-Catholic elements into Christ in the House of his Parents could have seemed a most appropriate way of doing so.

In summary, Christ in the House of his Parents consists of diverse aspects, mixed together by Millais in his effort to develop a new Pre-Raphaelite religious imagery, which would take the place of that normally chosen by the Royal Academy. Medievalizing "earnestness" would replace the slickness and insincerity of the Academy's Renaissance traditions, while the "truth" entailed in naturalism would supplant the idealized stereotypes central to Academic art. Although none of the individual components which make up Christ in the House of his Parents were original to the Pre-Raphaelites, or even particularly new in 1850, together they were novel, especially within the context of the Royal Academy; as such, they posed a distinct challenge to its accepted aesthetic.70

While it is difficult to assess what motivates an artist, it does not appear that Millais painted Christ in the House of his Parents with the slightest intent of offending the public. Millais had been a child prodigy, who, at the age of eleven, embarked upon his formal training at the Royal Academy.71 He was clearly able
and willing to please his instructors, and had won a series of
awards for his work, including the Academy's gold medal for painting.\textsuperscript{72}
The impression given by Millais in 1850 is that of a high-spirited
and intelligent, though not necessarily intellectual twenty-year
old, deeply immersed in art, possessed of formidable talents, and
just venturing into a promising career. Certainly there was nothing
in his past to suggest that his aspirations consisted of anything
other than pleasing his public, and attaining the place of artistic
prominence for which he was so obviously being groomed.

Although he was interested in religious art and in the
Anglo-Catholic movement, Millais was no Christian zealot, ready to
estrange public opinion through the uncompromising expression of his
faith. That he was attempting to create a new kind of art, which
would be noticed, and which would replace the out-moded conventions
of the Royal Academy is clear, but that his picture would outrage
rather than please, and that the attention he sought would assume
the form of notoriety, does not seem to have occurred to him.

One small cloud did appear, just before the opening of the
Royal Academy exhibition. The meaning of the initials "PRB" was
discovered and revealed to the public by \textit{The Illustrated London
News}. Its critic, Angus Reach, adopted a condescending tone as he
discussed the "new-fashioned school or style in painting lately
come into vogue," and he criticized the Pre-Raphaelites'
medievalizing style, ("saints squeezed out perfectly flat.") Since this periodical had a circulation of close to 100,000, and since it targeted a public likely to attend the Academy show, many of the approximately 200,000 visitors to the exhibition would probably have entered it with Reach's sarcastic comments concerning a medievalizing "Brotherhood" fresh in their minds. Apart from this, however, there was nothing to prepare Millais and the other Pre-Raphaelites for the hostile press releases of the following few months.

In fact, it is likely that Millais awaited the opening of the exhibition in a fairly optimistic frame of mind. The generally positive reviews of 1849, coupled with the knowledge that all the Pre-Raphaelite images of that year had found buyers, had prompted his confident assertion that "the success of the PRB is now quite certain." His 1850 submission, with its potentially problematic medievalism evidently re-worked to his satisfaction, and its combination of naturalism and typology, must have seemed just the right mixture to guarantee PRB success.
FOOTNOTES


5 Reynolds, "Discourse Four," Discourses, page 37.


7 Reynolds, "Discourse Four," Discourses, page 53.


15 Errington, Social, page 178.

[Frederick George Stephens], under the pseudonym of John Seward, "The Purpose and Tendency of Early Italian Art," The Germ, No. 2 (February 1850), pages 60-61.


Loc. cit.

Loc. cit.


This dilution of medievalizing elements differs from Millais's procedure the previous year, with Isabella, as is shown by an examination of the preparatory sketch for that work. (Figs. 4 and 5). With the exception of a few minor changes, poses are the same in sketch and finished version. Figures remain equally slim in both works, and the original perspective also is retained. Space is cramped in both images. Twelve people crowd around a table which is obviously too small to seat them in comfort, although in the final version the claustrophobia of this arrangement is mitigated to a certain extent by the enlargement of the open space above the figures. This produces an airiness, which is not present in the sketch, but otherwise, space is articulated in the same manner in both sketch and painting.
As a cohesive entity, Young England had ceased to exist in 1846. However, its members remained both politically active and true to their Young England ideals.


[John Tupper], "The Subject in Art, Number One," *The Germ*, No. 1 (January 1850), page 14.


Ibid., page 66.

Ibid., page 67.

Millais's sister-in-law and father sat for the Virgin and St. Joseph, while his cousin and brother modelled for St. John and the apprentice, respectively. The sitter for St. Elizabeth is unknown. Millais, *Life*, vol. 1, page 78.


In general, the middle classes were not interested in medievalism. "Anon., "Advice to Aspiring Artists," *Punch*, 9 (1845), page 103.

Millais's *The Benjamites Seizing Their Brides*, (Fig. 7), of 1845, was taken from Judges 21. Millais, *Life*, vol. 1, page 18. His *Widow's Mite*, of 1847, a large canvas submitted to the Westminster Hall competition, depicted a New Testament parable. Its present location is unknown. Millais, *Life*, vol. 1, page 38. Also in 1847, Dante Gabriel Rossetti painted a religious work, *Retro Me Sathana*, which he later destroyed. Virginia Surtees,

39 [Stephens], The Germ, No. 2 (February 1850), page 62.

40 Ibid., page 64.

41 Ibid., page 63.

42 [Tupper], The Germ, No. 1 (January 1850), pages 11 and 17.

43 Ibid., page 11.

44 Ibid., page 18.

45 [Stephens], The Germ, No. 2 (February 1850), page 63.

46 Loc. cit.

47 The idea that "minute imitation" was inadmissible in "elevated themes" was expressed by Charles Eastlake, in "Number Four, The State and Prospects of the English School," Contributions to the Literature of the Fine Arts, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1848; reprint ed., 1870), vol. 1, pages 38-39. Eastlake became the president of the Royal Academy in the fall of 1850.


50 Loc. cit.

51 [Rossetti], "The Royal Academy Exhibition," The Critic, vol. 9 (1 July 1850), page 336.

52 [Rossetti], "The Royal Academy Exhibition," The Critic, vol. 9 (1 August 1850), page 382.

53 Loc. cit. Eastlake became the president of the Royal Academy in November, 1850, replacing the octogenarian Martin Archer Shee, whose death in August of that year after a lengthy illness, had not been unexpected. According to The Critic, Eastlake's promotion had also been "generally anticipated," (Anon., "The President of the Royal Academy," The Critic, vol. 9 (15 November 1850),
page 550), so perhaps Rossetti's circuitous treatment of The Good Samaritan expressed a disinclination to offend the man whose assumption of the presidency was only a matter of time.

54[Rossetti], "The Royal Academy Exhibition," The Critic, vol. 9 (1 July 1850), page 336.


56The symbolism of the door, which is discussed in this paragraph, comes from Lindsay Errington's Social and Religious Themes, page 262.

57John 10:9 and 11.


59Ibid., page 27.

60Apart from the biblical verse, the painting was exhibited without a title, a not unknown practice at the Academy. (Zechariah 13:6 appeared in the exhibition catalogue.) The Art Journal, which published the most complete review of the show, mentioned three titleless works, two of which were based upon the Bible, and which were accompanied by a scriptural text. Contemporary sermons were normally structured around a single excerpt from scripture, which acted as their thematic core, and which always appeared just above the printed sermon itself. Perhaps the idea of identifying a picture by means of the relevant scriptural passage corresponds to the habit of prefacing sermons with a biblical text.


62The Anglo-Catholic theologian with whom the Christological interpretation of the verse originated was Edward Bouverie Pusey. It is discussed in his Letter to the Bishop of London, (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1851), page 150.


65Ibid., vol. 1, pages 92-99.
The Academy did temper its taste with an awareness that artistic theory and practice were not necessarily synonymous, and, in addition, it was quite prepared to show a wide variety of works in its annual exhibitions. Nonetheless, it did retain its preference for the grand style.


Loc. cit. (For *The Benjamites Seizing Their Brides*, of 1845.)

R[each], A[ngus], "Town Talk and Table Talk," *The Illustrated London News*, vol. 16 (4 May 1850), page 306.


Millais to Dante Gabriel Rossetti, concerning the concluded sale of the latter's *Girlhood of Mary Virgin*; cited in Hilton, *The Pre-Raphaelites*, page 49. Hilton gives neither date nor location for Millais's letter, but it must have been written shortly after 25 July, 1849, when Rossetti sent the work to its purchaser. Surtees, *Paintings and Drawings*, page 10.
CHAPTER II: RELIGIOUS IMAGERY AND CHRIST IN THE HOUSE OF HIS PARENTS

As a religious painting, Christ in the House of his Parents belonged to a genre which was already defined by its own set of artistic rules. To understand these rules, we shall look firstly at Academic thought regarding religious pictures, in which Millais, as an ex-Academy student, would have been fully versed.

Religious works shown at the Royal Academy, as well as their critical fortunes, will be examined, so as to reveal what contemporary Academy-goers usually expected from this type of art. Such information will show how Millais's work departed from the established conventions for religious painting, and will enable us to determine what this departure signified, in social as well as artistic terms.

The mid-nineteenth century Academy's approach to religious imagery was defined in writing by Charles Eastlake, who became the R.A.'s president in the fall of 1850, and by Charles Leslie, its professor of painting since 1847. In conformity with a centuries-old Academic tradition, Eastlake organized the various artistic genres into a hierarchy, placing history painting, (which included religious subjects), at the top, as the "highest" form of art. Pre-eminence derived from two criteria; elevated content and idealizing language.
Following precedents laid down by Alberti in his influential *Della Pittura*, Eastlake wrote that painting should reach the moral and intellectual faculties of the viewer, or, as he put it, should "awaken the nobler sympathies."\(^{3}\) This could be accomplished through the depiction of elevated subject matter, which, according to Eastlake, consisted of "all that is permanently graceful or refined, all that is rational or intellectual in joy, and all that is dignified in sorrow—all, in short, that is human and religious."\(^{4}\) Clearly, Eastlake believed that high art dealt with eternal qualities, and he went on to say that if the subjects portrayed in history painting could activate "noble and elevated feelings," then, "the end of art may safely said to be accomplished in any age, for the human and Christian character is as certain in its definition as the character of the art."\(^{5}\) In other words, Eastlake did not perceive that his definition of refinement or dignity in artistic subject matter was a product of values shaped by nineteenth-century experience and grounded in the aristocratically-oriented taste of the Royal Academy. Instead, his taste in thematic content, and, as we shall see, in artistic form as well, was conceptualized as an eternal, classless entity, floating untouched above the vicissitudes of history.

The second essential characteristic of high art was idealization; and, like so much of Academic theory, this too can be traced to the Renaissance and to Alberti's comments concerning the arts.\(^{6}\)
While the natural appearance of an object was to be imitated, it was also to be refined by generalizing its forms, and diminishing or eliminating their details and idiosyncracies. Bodies were to be idealized as well, and both Leslie and Eastlake stipulated that the kind of figural idealization most appropriate for religious imagery was to be found in the type of physical beauty developed by the artists of the High Renaissance, most notably by Raphael, whom the two Academicians held to be the consummate religious painter. As with subject matter, the function of the idealized figure in art was not simply to please the eye. It too had a moral purpose, because, as Eastlake pointed out, "in all its highest forms, it [is] calculated to impress upon human beings the belief in a perfection greater than this world contains." Since the strongly idealized works of Raphael were held to appeal "in all places and to all classes of Christians," modern artists who wished to produce paintings typified by such universality were encouraged to emulate those of the Renaissance painter. They were even provided with specific models from which to proceed; these were the tapestry cartoons of the Acts of the Apostles.

As in the case of figural idealization, Academic stipulations concerning form were grounded in the traditions of the Renaissance; the rules of chiaroscuro, colour, and perspective were also invested with a universal character. In a discussion of colour and
drawing, Leslie commented that;

The Art of Painting is in no respect, excepting in what relates to its mechanical instruments, a human invention, but the result solely of the discovery and application of those laws by which Nature addresses herself to the mind and heart through the eye. 11

Based as they are upon the acceptance of artistic eternals, Leslie's claims regarding form closely resemble Eastlake's conclusions concerning the timelessness of subject matter, and of idealizing language. As in the case of subject matter and idealization, form too was imbued with a moral identity, although in a somewhat less direct manner. Leslie's discussions of form, filled as they are with words such as "healthy,"12 "pure,"13 and "refined,"14 which often appeared when he dealt with the colour or the chiaroscuro of pictures he admired, give the distinct impression that, according to his Academic taste, even pigmentation and shading contained moral overtones.

By endowing Academic taste with the qualities of immortality and universality; Leslie and Eastlake implied that its standards must naturally be the dominating factor in contemporary painting. However, upon examining the art scene of the 1840's, one quickly discovers that such was not the case. In actuality, the position occupied by the Academic tradition, as far as its popularity with artists and patrons was concerned, was hardly one of strength. Indications of its fragility can be gleaned even from Eastlake and
Leslie themselves.

To begin with, as Eastlake himself admitted, paintings executed according to Academic conventions had difficulty in finding purchasers,\(^1\) and as a result, few artists produced them. Even Leslie avoided them, choosing instead to focus upon portraiture and upon the illustration of scenes from Goldsmith, Moliere, and Shakespeare; though at the same time he urged his students to verse themselves in the style and subject matter associated with history painting.

Far more marketable than works designed along traditional Academic lines were genre scenes—small, intimate studies of daily life, which were characterized by a careful attention to detail.\(^1\)\(^6\) Pictures of this type crowded the walls of the Academy's annual exhibitions, and were greatly in demand, especially among middle-class buyers.

The Academic response to such art was divided between outright hostility and a condescending tolerance. Speaking perhaps for many Academicians, Leslie scornfully dismissed genre painting as "commonplace imitation," which appealed only to the "mediocre taste" of the "multitude," who were "blind to the highest qualities of Art."\(^1\)\(^7\) The reason for Leslie's attack becomes clear once the
weakness of the Academic tradition is taken into account; for if
indeed the artistic conventions which he supported had been strong
in 1850, the development and even the financial success of genre
could pose little threat to them. That Leslie's cherished high
art was in the process of being replaced was the fact which underlay
his anger.

Unlike Leslie, Eastlake was more willing to tolerate the
"school exclusively devoted to indiscriminate imitation" which pro-
duced the "pictures of familiar subjects...of late years predom-
inant" in English art. However, he strongly differentiated between
these works and high art, and asserted that genre did not: "repre-
sent the universal and unalterable taste of the nation." 18

A further indication of the tenuousness of the Academic
tradition can be perceived in the growing fascination with medieval
art, which became increasingly widespread throughout the post-1830
period. 19 This interest was shared by some Academicians, such as
Eastlake, who acquired late medieval works for the National Gallery
during his tenure as director of that institution, and by William
Dyce, who included medieval features in his own paintings. 20 Dyce
admired quattrocento art because he associated it with "spiritual
...perfection," 21 and Eastlake commented that medieval works
"contained...the germs of a perfect development," 22 (emphasis
mine), but in neither case did the taste for early art preclude the
belief in the primacy of works executed according to the tenets of the Academy. Nonetheless, it is possible that the interest in medieval art was grounded in a sense of dissatisfaction with the conventional style, and in the hope that elements of medieval art could be employed to revitalize the traditions of the Academy.

An appreciation for the spiritual qualities in quattrocento works existed outside the community of practising artists. Here, we need only look at Lord Lindsay's *Sketches of the History of Christian Art,* or to the articles written for *The Athenaeum* by the art critic George Darley. Lindsay maintained that quattrocento painting described a "world of spiritual beauty;" while Darley wrote that it was filled with "perfections spiritual, moral, [and] intellectual," in spite of the fact that it was also disfigured by a "multitude of technical sins" in anatomy, perspective, and chiaroscuro.

However, despite their admiration for quattrocento art, neither Lindsay nor Darley wished to displace the High Renaissance tradition. Nor did they bring a particularly new approach to the general theories concerning religious art. Both held that religious images contained timeless qualities. Lindsay claimed that "the Painting of Christendom...is that of an immortal Spirit conversing with its God," and that it was a "glimpse of that truth and beauty which the soul seeks after, and of which the prototype exists but in heaven." Clearly, like Eastlake, Lindsay believed that all Christian
art was the expression of a single, eternal ideal shared by Christians everywhere.

The concepts held by Lindsay and Darley regarding the form which Christian art should take were also similar to those of Eastlake and Leslie. Both admired the idealized figure, and Darley consistently supported the generalizing approach and suppression of detail which was the hallmark of Academic art. Ultimately, Darley and Lindsay subscribed to the Academic definition of high art, in spite of their taste for the moral and spiritual purity of the art of the later middle ages.

Perhaps the clearest indication of the true position occupied by the Academic tradition in 1850 can be gained through an examination of the works devoted to religious subject matter which were exhibited with Christ in the House of his Parents. Those most frequently reviewed, and in the most appreciative terms, were: Eastlake's The Good Samaritan; Dyce's The Meeting of Jacob and Rachel; and Samson Betrayed, by F.R. Pickersgill. (Figs. 11, 12, and 10). None of these particularly resemble the famous tapestry cartoons of Raphael, after which practitioners of high art were normally encouraged to pattern their own religious works. Dyce's sharp focus and rather hard forms owe much to quattrocento art, and critical comment regarding Samson Betrayed held that its colour was much like that of Etty, whose colourism in its turn
derived from Rubens. Samson Betrayed shows that Pickersgill, like Etty, was working in the tradition established by the Baroque artist. Lastly, Eastlake's soft, subtle modelling is more reminiscent of Titian, or perhaps the Bolognese School, than of Raphael.

Despite such stylistic eclecticism, however, these three paintings do generally adhere to the established ideas regarding high art, and this is perhaps most apparent in the case of Eastlake's Good Samaritan. Its theme, that of compassion, fulfills requirements concerning the elevated content of history painting. The figures are highly idealized; and, in keeping with the generalizing approach favoured by the Academy, forms are simple, details kept to a minimum. The location, too, is generalized; although the setting of the story is on the road between Jericho and Jerusalem, Eastlake's landscape is not identifiably eastern. In fact, its broad treatment indicates that it could exist almost anywhere. Dress is not particularized either, as the simple costumes worn by the Samaritan, and the priest and the Levite who are "passing by on the other side," correspond to the vaguely biblical robes assigned to religious figures since the Renaissance.

In analysing mid-nineteenth century religious painting, it is clear that discrepancies existed between theory and practice, since obviously, despite the literature which recommended Raphael's model above all, the actual production of religious works involved
stylistic references to diverse sources. Nonetheless, this certainly should not be interpreted as a rejection of the existing patterns concerning high art, for, as the examination of The Good Samaritan has revealed, it was accompanied by an adherence to the essential tenets of the Academy. Ultimately, perhaps a more accurate way of viewing these images may be as the products of artists who remained strongly committed to the Academic tradition, and who observed its rules, but who also wished to introduce modifications into it, possibly in the hope that such variations would enable them to reach a wider public.

That they did experience some critical success with the most conservative elements in society is clear, since the periodicals which represented this readership professed a strong admiration for The Good Samaritan, Samson Betrayed, and Jacob and Rachel. In praising Jacob and Rachel, The Times' art critic worried that viewers might at "first glance" be "repel[led]" by a "certain dryness and flatness...to which our eyes are not familiar in the British school," but s/he explained this fault with:

We do not hesitate to say that few modern pictures have been painted more nearly in the manner of...Raffaello in his earlier styles. The outline is firm and correct. The drapery a little quaint, but noble...The attitude is but the gesture of timorous or tortured love from the beginning of the world, for who has not at some time breathed vows as passionate as these?...[This work] combines a very high degree of natural emotion and natural grace with ideal treatment and refinement. 37
Essentially, The Times' response to Jacob and Rachel reads like a repetition of the Academic formula for a successful history painting. Naturalistic qualities are refined by idealism, potentially problematic stylistic elements are smoothed away through the invocation of Raphael, and the theme is structured around an "unchanging," elevated characteristic, such as love. Even the draperies are "noble."

The Good Samaritan, which The Times described as a work "of the highest order," was also discussed in terms strongly reminiscent of Academic taste.

The wounded man, barely raised from the dust in which he lay, is supported by the hand of mercy and love. The drawing and colour of his naked form are finished with extreme care, and his face turns upwards with an expression of exquisite gratitude and trust; in some other respects the picture is still unfinished, but we hardly like it the less for the subdued and unobtrusive character of the secondary subjects. It is on the sufferer and the Samaritan that the mind and eye rest, for in the symbolical role and in the majestic countenance of that compassionate being we trace at once the Samaritan over his afflicted brother--the Saviour over afflicted man. 38

Here, the critic's approval of The Good Samaritan is keyed by the painting's suitably dignified theme, its idealization, and the unobtrusiveness of its details. This response, so similar to that evoked by Jacob and Rachel, reveals how firmly the aesthetic of the Academy was entrenched in The Times.
Like The Times, other journals which served the upper echelons of Victorian society employed the theories of the Academy in order to explain how they felt a religious picture should be constructed. The Spectator commented:

The historical painter penetrates through mere manners and costume to the enduring qualities of humanity; he delights to depict the great elements of emotion as they are evoked by events that overrule smaller accessories; and then, although the accomplished artist will not omit costume and other accessories, they sink to a secondary place, and fail to concentrate the attention. 39

The readership of this periodical differed from that of The Times, as it largely consisted of highly educated, politically liberal members of the middle and upper middle classes.40 However, its concept of history painting, in which details, though important, must be transcended in order to get at unchanging human characteristics, is a close paraphrase of Reynolds, and would certainly have been at home in the pages of The Times. That Academic art theory, though originally associated with aristocratic taste, had been accepted by portions of the haute bourgeoisie, indicates that although political differences did exist between the nobility and the upper middle classes, their definitions of culture were closely related.

Ideologically, The Spectator's approach to history painting resembles that of Eastlake. Like the Royal Academician, The Spectator's critic obviously believed that his/her taste was grounded
in an objective norm; in universals, rather than in historically shaped circumstances.

Academic ideas concerning idealization also appeared in the pages of upper middle class and aristocratic publications. They demanded that figures in religious art be idealized, and they associated the physical ideal with the traditions of classical Greece, and with Raphael, claiming that the purpose behind such idealization was the depiction of elevated behaviour. Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine called Raphael the "most eminently Christian painter," because his works were typified by "dignified benevolence and exalted humanity." The Spectator commented that:

What fixes your regard in viewing a work by Raphael is the absorbing piety, the courage, the dignity, the love, the command, the terror--the one grand or beautiful Sentiment which is the soul of the scene. The countenances, the figures, the groups, are all on the same grand or beautiful scale. 42

These periodicals shared the Academic idea that the purpose behind such depictions of idealized forms and elevated themes was didactic. The Art Journal, in discussing the role of art, claimed it was a "teacher of a lofty kind--a teacher of history, manners, morals, virtue, and religion." In other words, religious paintings, with their noble subjects, were tangible essays in moral behaviour, and their function was to encourage viewers to aspire to the virtues
which they saw portrayed in paint. The crucial element, which informed viewers they were in the presence of exalted and unchanging virtues, was the idealized High Renaissance style, which had been invested with a moral identity of its own.

Turning from the periodicals targeting the upper ranks of English society to examine those of a more solidly middle-class orientation, we find a marked dissatisfaction with the Academy, and its art. **Punch** discussed the 1850 exhibition in general terms, complaining that its subject matter consisted largely of "Guelphs and Ghibelines, Charles II, William III, . . . velvet doublets, silk hose, and marvellous carved furniture," and demanded more naturalism and more pictures of "homely life." However, despite its dissatisfaction with the pictures on display at the Academy, **Punch** did subscribe to Academic art theory. Its critic commented that "true representation" was not to be "literal," but should involve "generalization, as well as a selection, a distribution, and subordination of parts." 

Like **Punch**, **Household Words** criticized the art on display at the Academy. In an article entitled "The Ghost of Art," Charles Dickens wrote that regardless of subject matter, many paintings at the Academy so resembled each other that it seemed as though a single model had posed for all of them. His criticisms were gently phrased, however, and like **Punch**, he too accepted Academic concepts regarding painting. He expressed a strong
admiration for Raphael's "idea of Beauty," and maintained that it deserved its position as the cornerstone of modern art theory due to its "power of etherealizing and exalting to the very Heavens what was most sublime and lovely in the... human face." Dickens's reaction to detailed naturalism was also in keeping with that of the Academy. He wrote that while naturalism was appropriate in a "rendering of a favourite horse, or dog, or cat," it was not admissible in important subjects, such as those connected with "religious aspirations, elevating thoughts, [and]... all enobling, sacred, graceful, or beautiful associations."50

Fundamentally, the pattern which appears in the periodical literature, regardless of class or political orientation, is that of a firm support for Academic definitions of high art, insofar as religious imagery is concerned; one which remains strong despite the widespread preference for genre, the growing popularity of medievalism, and middle-class dissatisfaction with the present state of the Royal Academy itself. Given the prevalent loyalty to tradition, how did Christ in the House of his Parents fare with critics committed to Academic taste?

Not unexpectedly, they experienced great difficulties with Millais's naturalism. The Builder shrank from his "painful display of anatomical knowledge,"51 and The Times found his "surprising power of imitation" to be "disgusting."52 The problem, as critics
from varying positions on the spectrum pointed out, was that in his overriding concentration upon naturalistic detail, Millais had omitted something of crucial importance from Christ in the House of his Parents. Dickens commented tartly that, "Art includes something more than the faithful portraiture of shavings." Tait's Edinburgh Magazine, voicing sentiments which could have been uttered by a Royal Academician, administered a kind of corrective for Millais's errors is stating that painting "attain[ed] its highest perfection in those works in which the powers of imitation and creation are jointly developed to the greatest degree," and it pointed to Raphael's tapestry cartoon of St. Paul Preaching at Athens as a "familiar example" of such perfection. However, while painting was to be "both imitative and creative," Tait's held that it was at its worst when dominated by "the imitative faculty of the artist," because ultimately it was "the creative. . .faculty," as evidenced in the idealized figure, which "conferred immortality on [a] work."

Critics agreed that the key element necessary in the production of such "immortal" art, one conspicuously absent from Christ in the House of his Parents, was idealization. Some were quite blunt in stressing the importance of this. The Builder attacked Millais's "literal depiction of the most ill-adapted models. . .[made] without in the least degree endeavouring to idealize."

Ralph Wornum, in his Art Journal review of Christ in the House of his Parents, explained the reasoning behind the call.
for idealization by stating unequivocally that, "the physical ideal alone can harmonize with the spiritual ideal; in Art. . . the most beautiful soul must have the most beautiful body." The implication of Wornum's thought is that a body not possessed of such standards of attractiveness cannot have a beautiful or spiritual soul.

Essentially, in failing to incorporate idealization into his treatment of religious subject matter, Millais deprived his viewers of a crucial component. Without the idealization which signalled the presence of moral virtue, and (although not on a conscious level), informed viewers that a work was to be perceived as a perfected image of themselves as Christians, normal relations between viewer and picture were disrupted, or overturned. Out of such a disintegration, a host of negative qualities crowded in to take the place of the dignified associations normally evoked by accepted religious imagery. These connotations, which many critics found deeply disturbing, and which will be discussed in the following chapter, were probably never dreamt of by Millais himself. Rather, his substitution of Pre-Raphaelite naturalism for the more traditional idealization was motivated by a desire to shed the conventions of the Academy, and perhaps also by a hope of attracting middle-class patrons of art, who, as Millais cannot have been unaware, typically favoured naturalistic works in preference to those styled along the more accepted Academic lines. It was in this attempt to
please the taste normally displayed by such a public that Millais made a serious miscalculation, for, as we have seen, when religious imagery was involved, the partiality for naturalism and the dissatisfaction with traditional art were superseded by a staunch loyalty to Academic idealizing conventions.
FOOTNOTES

1Both Eastlake and Leslie derived a great deal of their aesthetic theory from Reynolds.


5Loc. cit.


13 Ibid., pages 200 and 201.

14 Ibid., page 201.


20 Eastlake was the National Gallery's director between 1855 and 1865. He had been its Keeper from 1843 to 1847, and a Trustee between 1850 and 1855. For his interest in late medieval art, see David Robertson, Sir Charles Eastlake and the Victorian Art World, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), pages 129 and 134. Dyce's medievalism is discussed by Marcia Pointon, William Dyce 1806-1864, A Critical Biography, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1979).


24 Ibid., vol. 3, page 422.
25[George Darley], "Foreign Correspondence," The Athenaeum, (8 December 1838), page 875.

26Lindsay, Sketches, vol. 3, page 420.


28Lindsay, Sketches, vol. 3, pages 418-419.

29[George Darley], "Fine Arts, the Mission of Amateurs," The Athenaeum, (28 March 1846), page 327.

30Lindsay, Sketches, vol. 1, page xiv.

31Ibid., vol. 1, page xvi.


33Darley, loc. cit.

34Out of the 1,456 pictures shown at the Academy, approximately twenty were religious images. Total for works exhibited is from, Anon., "Fine Arts," The Guardian, vol. 5 (8 May 1850), page 336.


36The parable of the good Samaritan comes from Luke 10:30-37.

37Anon., "Exhibition of the Royal Academy, Second Notice," The Times, (6 May 1850), page 5, column 1. The source for Jacob and Rachel is Genesis, chapters 28 and 29. For the readership of The Times, see Ellegård, Victorian Periodicals Newsletter, Number 13 (September 1971), page 4.


The link between the political and the artistic stances of any given periodical must be approached with caution, in that one cannot automatically assume a politically conservative magazine will be conservative in its artistic views, or that a politically liberal journal must be equally liberal in its approach to the arts. The Spectator, with its combination of liberal politics and conservative taste in painting, is a case in point.


The Spectator, vol. 23 (1 June 1850), page 523.


Punch, vol. 18 (early June 1850), page 240.

[Charles Dickens], "The Ghost of Art," Household Words, vol. 1 (20 July 1850), pages 385-386. For the middle-class readership of Household Words, see Altick, English Common Reader, page 347.

Anon., "The Royal Academy Exhibition," The Builder, vol. 8 (1 June 1850), page 256. Ironically, Millais had employed two of these "ill-adapted models" the year before, for Isabella. (Fig. 5). Millais's sister-in-law, who sat for the Virgin in Christ in the House of his Parents, posed for Isabella; and his father, who modelled for St. Joseph, sat for the man with the napkin. Leslie Parris, ed., The Pre-Raphaelites, (London: The Tate Gallery, 1984), page 69. No one had objected to them then, and The Athenaeum had even complimented Millais upon the figures. [Solomon Hart], "Fine Arts, Royal Academy, Paintings," The Athenaeum, (2 June 1849), page 575. While idealization was not necessary for the illustration of a poem by Keats, it was of crucial importance in a religious image, such as Christ in the House of his Parents.

CHAPTER III: THE CRITICAL REACTION TO CHRIST IN THE HOUSE OF HIS PARENTS

In examining the critical attacks upon Christ in the House of his Parents, one is struck by their extraordinary violence, which, by virtue of their animosity, reveal how threatening the image must have seemed to the horrified journalists who reviewed it.\(^1\) Millais's picture was variously described as "ugly, graceless, and unpleasant;"\(^2\) "mean, odious, repulsive, and revolting;"\(^3\) and even as "monstrously perverse,\(^4\) in an intensity of language which simply does not appear elsewhere in the otherwise politely expressed diction typical of English art criticism at this time:

Repeatedly, the critics focussed upon Millais's medievalizing style, which they maintained was inherently flawed; and upon the ugliness of his figures, who appeared to them to resemble the slum dwellers of modern England rather than the Holy Family. Accordingly, this chapter will concentrate most heavily upon these two areas of medievalism and poverty, since they were of most importance to the critics themselves.\(^5\)

Radically different from the mass of negative commentary was the reaction of a single journal, The Guardian, which, despite some reservations concerning medievalism, pronounced in favour of Christ in the House of his Parents. As we shall see, The Guardian's
stance regarding medievalism and poverty was markedly different from that entertained by the other periodicals, and it was this which helped shape its positive response to Millais's painting.

In the preceding chapter, we examined the ways in which nineteenth century artists and critics argued for the correspondence of physical beauty with moral or spiritual beauty. In this chapter we shall discuss the reverse side of this concept, which stated that external physical flaws signalled the presence of interior defects. This idea was so deeply engrained in the minds of Millais's critics that they simply could not associate his "ugly" figures with exalted characteristics.

For some writers, the lack of idealization in Millais's work added an extra dimension to the concept that unattractive figures must be possessed of equally unlovely souls. They identified both physical and psychic disfigurement with a specific class in English society to which they felt such negative qualities particularly belonged. When confronted with the apparently deformed physiques of Christ in the House of his Parents, these critics thought of the urban poor, and they produced a fully developed image of modern pauperism, detailing the behaviour, the locales, and even mentioning specific diseases which they associated with poverty.
In *Household Words*, Dickens commented that the Virgin would be at home in "the vilest cabaret in France, or the lowest gin-shop in England," and that St. Joseph and his young apprentice resembled patients in a paupers' hospital. The *Tait's* critic claimed that Millais had obviously found his Virgin Mary, ("a whining, sickly woman"), in a "lane-or alley," thereby indicating that she reminded him/her of one of the poverty-stricken denizens of the crooked streets which constituted an urban slum.

Several critics remarked that the figures looked unhealthy. *Blackwood's*, *Punch*, and *Tait's* wrote that some showed marked symptoms of rachitis, or ricketts, and *Punch* discerned evidence of "scrofula," a common form of tuberculosis, in the "emaciated bodies, shrunken legs, and tumid ankles [sic]" of the Holy Family. Discussions of scrofula and rachitis often appear in nineteenth century literature concerning the poor. Both diseases were widely viewed as inevitable aspects of poverty. In his classic study of poverty in Manchester, Friedrich Engels wrote that

Scrofula is almost universal among the working class. Rachitis is extremely common among the children of the working class. Children who are half-starved must inevitably become scrofulous and rachitic in a high degree.

In recoiling from the ill health of Millais's Holy Family, *Punch* related their scrofulitic condition to a lack of personal
cleanliness, claiming that "the squalid filth for which the whole group is remarkable is associated with a disorder, [scrofula], notoriously connected with dirt."14 Other critics too objected to the unclean figures. The Athenaeum and Tait's complained about the "unwashed"15 bodies; Dickens wrote that they were "dirty,"16 and The Times found itself disgusted by the fact that Millais's picture featured "no conceivable omission of dirt."17 Like the remarks concerning scrofula and rachitis, these comments too were pointed references to poverty, as contemporary discussions of the poor invariably included scandalized observations regarding their lack of personal hygiene, as well as the filthy conditions in which they lived.18

Some of the critics went so far as to associate Millais's Holy Family with "vices" considered characteristic of the poor. Dickens focussed upon alcoholism, a common element of slum life, when he wrote that St. Joseph and his apprentice resembled a pair of "drunkards," and he even referred to the favoured drink of the poor by placing the Virgin in a "low gin-shop."19

In addition to drunkenness, charges of sexual promiscuity were often levelled at the poor, and literature concerning slum life typically claimed that the poor engaged in extra- or pre-marital relations, that they were indiscriminate in their choice of partners, and that their children were frequently born out of wedlock. Tait's
Edinburgh Magazine invoked this aspect of the popular stereotype associated with poverty in its review of Christ in the House of his Parents. Its critic wrote that the young Christ was a "bantling," an illegitimate child, whose status as the product of an irregular union was shared by many children in the slums. Unlike Household Words or Tait's, Punch did not link poverty with alcoholism or promiscuity. Instead, its approach was vague. It connected the Holy Family with unspecified "irregularities in living," but it declined to go into detail regarding the type of behaviour which it considered typical of the poor.

Clearly, the evocation of such a negative stereotype, especially when related to the Holy Family, would have been enough to alienate the critics who reviewed Millais's work. However, the stereotype of poverty was actually motivated by a real fear of the poor, one which consistently marked the literature dealing with pauperism, and which surely exacerbated the hostility with which Christ in the House of his Parents was received.

The following article on a pauper children's school, written by Frederick Hunt for Household Words, is an excellent example of the trepidation with which the propertied classes contemplated the poor.

[Norwich School] may be called a factory for making harmless...subjects of the very worst of human material--a place for converting those who
would certainly be miserable and most likely vicious, into rational, reasonable, and often very useful members of society;--in short, a house for training a large and wretched class in habits of decency, regularity, and order, and leading a pitiable section of...London from the road to crime into that of honest industry and self-respect. 22

Hunt's compassion for the poor, whom he describes as "pitiable," "wretched," and "miserable," is obvious; but intertwined with his sympathy is the nervous belief that the class in question is an intimidating entity; whose children, if not "made harmless" in time, will become vicious criminals, devoid of all decent characteristics.

The Times echoed Hunt's contradictory sentiments in an article examining the beggars of London.

The idle ruffians who molest our streets... are nothing more or less than freebooters whose plan is to live by lying, terrifying, bullying, obstructing and every other form of petty mischief. They thrive like vermin by wasting the substance... of the industrious and can only be regarded... as thieves. 23

The vocabulary employed by the anonymous Times journalist reveals a deep-seated antagonism and alarm concerning the poor, who are reduced to a less than human status in being dismissed as "vermin." At the same time, they are perceived as a genuinely threatening presence, bullying and molesting honest citizens in the streets of London.
This commentator's anxiety, which was so often voiced in the literature dealing with the poor, was grounded in the tenseness of relations between the propertied and unpropertied classes, which had prevailed for much of the first part of the nineteenth century. The most recent manifestation of working class discontent had been embodied in the Chartist demonstration of 10 April, 1848. While by 1850, Chartism had been so clearly defeated that *Punch* could support the release of imprisoned Chartists, ("now made harmless by the common sense and common loyalty of the English people,"\(^24\) fearful memories of the unrest of 1848 remained sharp, as did the awareness of a constantly smouldering sense of disaffection on the part of the lower working classes.\(^25\)

Such working class unrest sprang from a series of events which had transformed England, and which had been accelerating throughout the century. The first half of the century saw recurrent crop failures, which produced agricultural unemployment and generally depressed conditions.\(^26\) Large numbers flocked from the countryside into the city, as rural labourers sought employment in the great towns.\(^27\) Many encountered only continuing poverty. A massive influx of impoverished Irish migrants intensified this situation, particularly after the potato famine of 1846. Due to this combination of circumstances, the existence of discontent among the lower working classes remained strong.\(^28\)
Estimates varied regarding how many paupers crowded the new urban centres, but everyone agreed that they constituted a serious problem, which must be addressed before it reached impossible proportions. Differing solutions were put forward; from enforced emigration, or sanitary reform; to education, whether secular or religious; to a change in the laws which determined support for the destitute, and, while all of these measures were acted upon to a certain extent, and did achieve some degree of success, the problem remained firmly entrenched in English society.

That the lower working classes existed in a chronic state of discontent was widely believed among the middle and upper classes in England. It was this knowledge which imbued the already negative stereotype of the poor with its threatening aspects, and which must also have been at least partially responsible for the extreme anger which appeared in some of the critical responses to Christ in the House of his Parents.

While every critic who reviewed Christ in the House of his Parents maintained that the figures were ugly, or distorted, or even deformed, not all went on to link these physical defects with poverty, or even to discuss the issue. The explanation for this lies in the broader treatment of poverty normally displayed by the journals for which these critics wrote. Essentially, periodicals which typically featured a hostile and fearful approach to the poor
exhibited the same reaction to the poverty they thought they detected in Millais's work, whereas those magazines lacking a frightened, belligerent attitude toward poverty in general also failed to voice it in their reviews of Christ in the House of his Parents. Ultimately, the key to these differing responses to both poverty and Millais's painting lies in a disagreement concerning the efficacy of the institutions responsible for the maintenance of the poor. Those journals, like The Spectator, The Athenaeum, and The Guardian, which did not connect Christ in the House of his Parents with poverty generally held that the poor were being looked after with marked success. They tended to point to the victories of institutions which dealt with the poor, rather than to widespread failures in this area, and their confident approach meant that they displayed much less anxiety regarding the poor than did the other journals.

Both The Spectator and The Athenaeum wrote for a predominantly haute bourgeois readership of liberal politics. This group, or, more precisely, the Whig party which represented their interests, had played a major role in passing the new Poor Law of 1834, which was still in place in 1850. Therefore, the journals which catered to this class naturally approved of the institutions through which the pauper community was maintained, since these had been largely shaped by their own political philosophy.

By contrast, those periodicals which attacked Christ in the
House of his Parents for its apparent references to poverty held that such institutions were failing in their task of civilizing and controlling the poor, and they insisted that the problems associated with poverty, such as vice, disease, crime, and discontent, were not being solved, but perhaps were even worsening.34

These journals were aimed at readerships of widely divergent class backgrounds and varying political stances. For instance, Blackwood's was a staunchly conservative Tory monthly, directed mainly to the country aristocracy,35 while Punch and Household Words, both of which espoused a liberal and reforming position, attracted a solidly middle-class public.36 Nevertheless, whether estranged from the pattern expressed by The Spectator or The Athenaeum due to political or class differences, all of these periodicals shared an inability to participate in the liberal high bourgeoisie's solution to the problem of poverty.

As in the case of the reaction to poverty, in which critical hostility had been distributed throughout the spectrum of class and politics, an equally disparate group of journals articulated the suspicion that Christ in the House of his Parents was connected with Roman Catholicism.37 Liberal Household Words attacked Millais's work by linking it with the Roman Catholic art of both past and present. Dickens wrote that the spirit of Pre-Raphaelitism originated in the "ugly religious caricatures (called mysteries)," which dated from the Pre-Reformation period, and he
claimed facetiously that the Brotherhood's example had inspired Roman Catholic architect Augustus Welby Pugin to design a series of manuscript books, "in characters nobody on earth shall be able to read."\textsuperscript{38} The critic who wrote for the conservative \textit{Art Journal} disliked Millais's painting because it reminded him of the unpleasant art produced under the patronage of the medieval Catholic church.\textsuperscript{39} In a later \textit{Art Journal} review, the writer, John Ballantyne, commented that he would "not be surprised if" the Pre-Raphaelites eventually seceded to the Roman church.\textsuperscript{40} Both Dickens and the critic contributing to \textit{Tait's}, a Radical magazine,\textsuperscript{41} indirectly conferred a Roman Catholic identity upon Millais's picture by linking it with specific Catholic sites in London. Dickens claimed that St. Joseph and his apprentice resembled "dirty drunkards," whose "very toes had walked out of [the slum parish of] St. Giles's,"\textsuperscript{42} while \textit{Tait's} localized Millais's scene of an "unwashed, whining brat, scratching itself against rusty nails in a carpenter's shop in the Seven Dials." This site was itself an area within St. Giles's.\textsuperscript{43} The population of St. Giles's consisted almost entirely of poor Irish Roman Catholics.\textsuperscript{44} It was a notorious district, and its name had become a catchword for the lowest forms of poverty. The ethnic origin and religious orientation of its inhabitants were as widely known as was the extreme nature of its deprivations.\textsuperscript{45}

It is clear that the suspected Roman Catholic elements in
Christ in the House of his Parents disturbed these critics, whether they expressed their antagonism in a dislike of medieval or modern Catholic art, or in descriptions of Catholic slum dwellers. The reasons for such dislike lay in the fact that although Roman Catholics themselves had been accorded a measure of official toleration, (they had been emancipated in 1829), no such acceptance had been extended to their religion on a popular level, and it was still viewed in a far from positive light by many Victorians. Anti-Catholicism, or "No-Popery," as it was often called, was strongly established in the England of 1850, where it permeated almost every level of society. Therefore, the critics who responded negatively to the supposed Roman Catholicism of Christ in the House of his Parents were voicing the dislike of a religious system which had surfaced many times before.

Those opposed to Roman Catholicism most commonly associated it with ignorance, and they believed that this quality manifested itself in religious superstition, which blocked the advances of science and reason. Punch's satirical attack on Catholicism's benighted understanding of science appeared in the following "Astronomical Examination Paper for the Catholic University," purportedly written by Primate Cullen.

The Sun is two yards in diameter;
It moves round the Earth;
It is made of bees' wax;
It rises in the west, and sets in the east;
It is called the Sun, because it first made its Appearance on a SUNday.
Having intimated that Catholicism's grasp of astronomy was pre-Copernican, Punch claimed that the other sciences fared equally badly in Catholic institutions. In medicine, for example, superstition was rife, and modern practices "would be entirely superseded by... saint's toe-nails... thaumaturgic mummies, miraculous old clothes, and canonised rags," which would be used in the treatment of "all diseases."49

Due to their backwardness, Roman Catholic populations were inevitably ridden with poverty and disease, since they were deprived of the intellectual advances which alleviated both illness and pauperism. Ireland, with its poverty, disease, and ignorance, was often singled out as the paradigm of the evils produced by Roman Catholicism.50

Catholicism was also made synonymous with religious and political oppression, and was thought to be implacably hostile to the essential freedoms most valued by English society. The Spectator believed that Catholicism was in opposition to "the spirit of free discussion... freedom of thought, a free press, and the reforming spirit."51 Punch suspected it was unfriendly to free trade,52 and Blackwood's claimed that its ultimate goal was the destruction of Protestantism, which that magazine perceived as the fountainhead of all the liberties which had made England a great nation.53
Such a negative response to Roman Catholicism assumes a great deal of meaning when examined in conjunction with the actual state of the Continental church during the first half of the nineteenth century. Although "No-Popery" in England was as old as the Reformation, it had experienced an upsurge during the 1820's. This corresponded with the assumption of the tiara by the first of the four strongly conservative popes who were to shape Catholicism between 1823 and 1850. Under these popes, the Inquisition was revived, censorship strengthened, and the clergy, no longer permitted to attend secular universities, were educated in seminaries from which modern ideas were barred. Therefore, given the nature of Catholicism during this period, it is not surprising that the image of the Roman Catholic church held by many people in England was one which revolved around ignorance and oppression.

Of equal negativity to many Victorians was an intensification of the Catholic church's missionary programme, both on the Continent and in Britain itself. English Protestants assured each other that, as Lord John Russell, the Whig Prime Minister, put it:

> the liberty of Protestantism has been enjoyed too long in England to allow. . .a foreign prince, [the pope], . . .to fasten his fetters upon a nation which has so. . .nobly vindicated its right to freedom of opinion, civil, political, and religious.

Russell was justified in his belief that Catholicism could
make little headway in England, for the widespread animosity towards it guaranteed that it would fail to sway the bulk of British Protestants. However, Russell, as well as many other Victorians, did identify one entity in English society which bore marked traces of Catholic influence, and which, alarmingly enough, seemed to be operating as a kind of fifth column in disseminating the evils of popery from within the Church of England itself. This was Anglo-Catholicism.60

Opinions differed regarding the exact nature of the relations between Anglo-Catholics and Rome. Many held that Anglo-Catholics were simply secret "papists,"61 while others maintained that the English movement was an unwitting dupe of Rome;62 but essentially, the belief that Roman Catholic involvement in English affairs would be furthered by Anglo-Catholicism was the spectre which most consistently frightened its opponents.

That the Anglo-Catholics did furnish their enemies with ample evidence of ties with the Continental church is true. They borrowed heavily from Rome, adapting portions of its church ritual for English use, but perhaps most objectionable, as far as Anglo-Catholicism's critics were concerned, was its revival of the medieval aspects of Catholicism, in both theology and the arts.
Therefore, it is not surprising that some of the journalists who reviewed *Christ in the House of his Parents* related its medievalism to that espoused by Anglo-Catholicism. Dickens, in describing a fictitious brotherhood which he facetiously claimed had appeared in response to Pre-Raphaelite medievalism, wrote that some "large Educational Institutions in the neighbourhood of Oxford are nearly ready to pronounce in favour of it." Oxford was the birthplace of Anglo-Catholicism, and the sect was so firmly identified with this city that it had been called the Oxford Movement. Dickens elaborated upon the medievalizing philosophy behind *Christ in the House of his Parents* by asserting that it "parallel[ed]" that of the small Tory group called Young England, which itself was very closely allied with Anglo-Catholicism. Ralph Wornum, in an article for *The Art Journal*, also made this connection, when he wrote about the band of painters whose "Gothic revival" works "had been conspicuous for the last two or three years in the London exhibitions," and who were "sometimes styled 'the Young England,' and sometimes the 'Pre-Raphael School.' "

Young England, which had officially disbanded in 1846, consisted of Benjamin Disraeli, Lord John Manners, George Smythe, (Viscount Strangford), and Alexander Cochrane-Baillie, (Baron Lamington). Manners and Smythe were staunch Anglo-Catholics, and the group as a whole subscribed to much of Anglo-Catholic thought. They were opposed to reform, and insisted that the solution to
many current problems could be found in a revitalized Anglican Church. They supported the resuscitation of feudalism and monasticism, were linked with elements of the Tory aristocracy, and they stood for the kind of paternalism which characterized Anglo-Catholicism.

Dickens explained why he found Young England's philosophy, of which *Christ in the House of his Parents* was the "tangible symbol," to be so objectionable. Essentially, it was "retrogressive" in that it deliberately chose to "ignore all that has been done for the happiness and elevation of mankind during three or four centuries of slow and dearly-bought amelioration." By "all that has been done," Dickens meant all post-medieval advances, and not only those concerned with painting. For Dickens, a world patterned after the retrogressive ideal fostered by *Christ in the House of his Parents* and Young England would be one in which the sciences, the arts, and even rules governing behaviour would all be transformed, reverting back to their medieval state. Thus, physics would be returned to its "Pre-Newtonian" condition, in which the "laws of gravitation" would be denied. In medicine, Harvey's discoveries regarding the "circulation of the blood" would be condemned, while literature was to fall back to its "Pre-Chaucerian" position, complete with an ancient, (and illegible), alphabet.

Clearly, Dickens was exaggerating in order to make his
point about the backwardness of medievalism, but the fact that most of his review dealt with this issue shows that, despite his humorous approach, he considered the subject of great significance. Although *Household Words* did not normally discuss art, "Old Lamps for New Ones" appeared prominently, as a leading article, another indicator of the importance which Dickens according this subject.

Dickens's own philosophy was radically opposed to that of medievalism on almost every issue. *Household Words* strongly supported reform; and against medievalism's tendency to locate its golden age in the past, and its idea that post-medieval English history had been a period of decline, *Household Words* stood for a belief in progress and a trust that the modern era represented the acme of human development. This was expressed by journalist Percival Leigh, in his article entitled "A Tale of the Good Old Times." Here, a medievalist is convinced to abandon his revivalism when the "good old times" which he so blindly admires are revealed to consist of nothing more than "battles, burnings, massacres, cruel tormentings, and atrocities." He is advised that the best times... are the oldest. They are the wisest, for the older the world grows the more experience it acquires. It is older now than ever it was. The oldest and best times the world has yet seen are the present... [A]... light [of progress and reform]... is gradually illuminating human darkness. 77
Faced with a cultural movement which would extinguish the light of human progress, and which, in doing so, would plunge the modern world into a condition of medieval ignorance and barbarism, Dickens felt compelled to attack it in his review of Christ in the House of his Parents. We can assume that Dickens's response, with its unshakeable faith in the gospel of progress, and its corresponding rejection of a philosophy which placed its utopia in the vanished past, certainly found a large audience among the middle classes, since Household Words, with its enormous circulation, was the most popular of the periodicals which examined Christ in the House of his Parents. 78

Although Dickens did object to medievalism upon religious grounds, most of his discussion had concentrated upon the secular implications of revivalism. However, some critics did dwell largely upon the religious aspects of medievalism, complaining that these were based in an unhealthy sentiment. The Art Journal's critic wrote that Millais's work was a remarkable example of the asceticism of painting; for there was a time when Art was employed in mortification of the flesh; and of that period is this work, for few ordinary observers there are who can look on it without a shudder. Greek Art raised men to the level of the gods, but the class of which we speak is a foretaste of the grave. 79

Ralph Wornum, also writing for The Art Journal, echoed his colleague's objections to the medievalism of Christ in the House of his Parents. He remarked that Millais's picture exhibited "the
most morbid asceticism of the cell," and furthermore, that Pre-Raphaelitism itself was a "purely ascetic movement," which "correspond[ed] to that intolerable idea that sanctification consists in the mortification of the flesh."80

Asceticism, founded upon the belief that men and women are inherently evil, involves a concentration upon human imperfections, as well as an insistence that the desired state of Christians should entail penance and contrition for sin. Clearly, the Art Journal critics were opposed to this philosophy, as the first writer's references to Greek art reveal. He admired Greek art, (and presumably that of the classically-inspired post-medieval period), because he perceived it as an exaltation of human characteristics, based in a belief in the intrinsic goodness and perfectibility of human nature. According to this critic's approach, any art founded upon a positive concept of humanity would automatically centre upon the expression of, or the appeal to, the best qualities in men and women. Conversely, an art which turned upon negative ideas regarding human nature would consist only of images focussed upon its depravity. It was this extinction of all that is valuable in men and women which the Art Journal critic may have had in mind when he called ascetic art a "foretaste of the grave."

Other critics structured their attacks upon Millais's medievalism around artistic concerns, but here again their belief in
the gospel of progress played an important role in determining the nature of their reaction. Repeatedly, they commented that a medievalizing style was inappropriate for religious subject matter because it was full of technical flaws. They complained that Millais's late medieval prototypes had been ignorant of even the most fundamental tenets governing perspective, colour, anatomy, and chiaroscuro, and that Millais himself had, as Blackwood's put it, reproduced their "errors, crudities, and imperfections" in his own painting. In doing so, he had inexplicably renounced[ed]. . .the progress that. . .has been made [in the post-medieval period]; rejecting the experience of centuries, to revert for models, not to art in its prime, but to art in its uncultivated infancy.  

For these critics, Renaissance art was so obviously the epitome of perfection that it automatically constituted the standard by which other forms of art were judged, and all stood or fell according to how closely they resembled cinquecento norms. The concept that pre-Renaissance art might be evaluated on its own terms, as a phenomenon existing apart from the Renaissance, was an idea foreign to these journalists, and they continued to berate medieval artists, (and Millais), for their failure to produce Renaissance-styled works.  

So certain were these writers that the fountainhead of true progress in the arts could be discerned in the High Renaissance, that they simply could not understand why Millais had deliberately
turned his back on its flawless traditions in favour of the errors of the later middle ages. The Spectator wondered whether Millais's medievalism might ultimately mask "some fatal constitutional disease in his genius," and Tait's questioned his sanity, but by far the most common assessment of the artist's motives centred upon the issue of "affectation." He was accused of hypocritically adopting his "uncouth" medieval mannerisms for the sole purpose of drawing attention to his works through the notoriety they would gain.

One journal had no difficulty in accepting that Millais's revivalism was motivated by sincere interest. This was The Guardian, which, as previously mentioned, constituted a significant departure from the norm in its approval of Christ in the House of his Parents. The Guardian's discussion of the work was published on the eighth of May, several weeks before most of the unfriendly reviews were issued. The anonymous critic optimistically expected that "the merits of" Christ in the House of his Parents would "be much canvassed," because the work was "of a high and novel order of genius," and because its figures were given "individual character," featuring none of the "mawkish repetition of stereotyped faces and forms, into which even our best modern artists are wont to slide." Nonetheless, the critic immediately qualified this approval by stating that Millais had gone too far in his departure from "stereotyped faces and forms." The problem lay in the area of medievalism. "We decidedly opine,"
the critic observed,

that this [withdrawal from stereotyping] might be effected without adopting the quaint distortions of figure which are rather accidents of the great Flemish painters, Van Eyck and Hemling, [sic], than real elements of their art and method of treatment. 89

Superficially, the objections voiced above by The Guardian resemble those of the other critics, in that the same link between medieval art and technical imperfection appears. However, the crucial difference lies in the fact that The Guardian did not conceive of these defects as proofs of the inherent inferiority of medieval art, and this is clearly articulated in its claim that such flaws were merely "accidents." Obviously then, The Guardian's dislike of Millais's medievalism was not the expression of a broader distaste for quattrocento art; nor was it grounded in a rejection of revivalism, for The Guardian was an Anglo-Catholic publication, and as such it supported the resuscitation of medieval art.90

That The Guardian's stance was essentially pro-medievalizing was perhaps responsible for the mildness of its objections to Christ in the House of his Parents. While it did not wholly approve of the way in which Millais had referred to his quattrocento prototypes, and while its taste, like that of the unfriendly periodicals, remained strongly influenced by the High Renaissance conventions which dominated nineteenth-century art, it certainly would have found
nothing disagreeable in either the practice of borrowing from medieval art, or in the philosophy which lay behind it.

As mentioned above, *The Guardian* did not relate the anatomical "distortions" of *Christ in the House of his Parents* to poverty; an issue which its review omitted altogether. Again, this is traceable to the attitudes held by this periodical concerning poverty. Typically, Anglo-Catholicism had never shared in the widespread fear of the poor, nor had it subscribed to the negative stereotype of poverty. Instead, Anglo-Catholicism treated the poor with marked respect, and even valued a life of poverty because it was thought to foster true spirituality.91 As a holy estate, poverty could only exist according to the will of God, and obviously any attempt to change or to eradicate it would be contrary to the divine plan. Therefore, the Anglo-Catholic approach to poverty tended to perpetuate it, by attempting to convince the poor that theirs was a desirable way of life.92

*The Guardian* exhibited this Anglo-Catholic attitude towards the poor. It published several articles which dealt with their plight, and all were characterized by a sympathetic examination of the subject.93 In addition, neither the negative connotations of poverty, nor the popular anxiety concerning the poor appeared in the pages of *The Guardian*. Therefore, since this periodical maintained no unpleasant image of poverty which could be activated by the
portrayal of an unidealized figure, and no fear of the poor to strengthen the repellent nature of such an image, its silence concerning poverty in its review of Christ in the House of his Parents is not difficult to understand. In fact, it is quite likely that the critic did not connect the painting with poverty.

However, only The Guardian exhibited the pattern of sympathy towards the poor combined with an acceptance of medievalism. For many of the other journals, as we have seen, Millais's failure to idealize his figures had sparked distasteful associations concerning the poor, especially in those periodicals which were most hostile toward the pauper community, and which, for reasons related to class or political orientation, could not participate in mainstream solutions to the problem of poverty. While The Guardian had no difficulties with the principles involved in Millais's revivalism, the other critics identified it as an attack upon their cherished ideas regarding human progress, whether manifested in the sciences, religion, or the arts. Clearly, a picture which seemed to challenge such fundamental assumptions constituted a distinct threat in the minds of these journalists, one which demanded a strong counteroffensive phrased so as to assert the validity of their own views, and at the same time to explode the philosophy which they saw exemplified in Christ in the House of his Parents.
FOOTNOTES


2 [Frederick Hardman], "The Pictures of the Season," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, vol. 68 (July 1850), page 82.


6 [Dickens], "Old Lamps," Household Words, vol. 1 (15 June 1850), pages 265-266.


8 [Hardman], "Pictures," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, vol. 68 (July 1850), page 82.


12 The link between malnutrition and rickets is well-documented. For a discussion of the connection between inadequate diet and tuberculosis, see Rene and Jean Dubos, The White Plague: Tuberculosis, Man, and Society, (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1952), page 140.


16. [Dickens], "Old Lamps," *Household Words*, vol. 1 (15 June 1850), page 265.

17. Anon., "Exhibition of the Royal Academy," *The Times*, (9 May 1850), page 5, column 1. A close examination of the figures reveals that some are dirty, as would be natural in a workshop. This is most noticeable in the hands and arms of St. Joseph. (Fig. 1, detail).


19. [Dickens], "Old Lamps," *Household Words*, vol. 1 (15 June 1850), page 266.


22. [Frederick Hunt], "London Pauper Children," *Household Words*, vol. 1 (31 August 1850), page 549.


25. Some examples are: Anon., "The Opening of the Session," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, vol. 65 (March 1849), page 363;

Between approximately 1800 and 1850, the population of Great Britain nearly doubled, growing from less than eleven million to just over twenty-one. By 1851, fully half the population was located in the urban centres, and of these, half again were immigrants from rural areas. K.S. Inglis, Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), page 3.

A further result of the migration from country to city was manifested in a breakdown in the traditional ties between the classes. Rural society was normally divided into small units of tenants who farmed an aristocratic estate. Tenants were usually known personally to their landlord, who, because he himself lived in close proximity to them, could successfully monitor their behaviour. B.I. Coleman, The Church of England in the Mid-Nineteenth Century, A Social Geography, (London: The Historical Association, 1980), pages 18-25.

However, when rural labourers moved into town, the old links with their landlords were snapped, and nothing existed in the urban centres to take their place. K.S. Inglis, Churches, page 4. In many cases, the new landlord was a middle-class slum owner who lived in a different section of the city, and who did not know his tenants.

Another disruption occurred in patterns of church attendance. Observance had been the rule in the country, and here the church had played a key role in the socialization of the working classes. Labourers who had attended services in the countryside often discontinued the practice upon taking up residence in town. Inglis, Churches, page 4. Many of those born in the city never acquired the habit at all. Ian Bradley, The Call to Seriousness, The Evangelical Impact on the Victorians, (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1976), page 50. Of course these were general trends, to which there were exceptions. Not everyone gave up church attendance once they had moved from the country to the city, and not all those born in the urban centres avoided church services.

or who could not afford even the cheapest lodging house, lived in the street. London's total population in 1851, was 2,363,000.


The link between Christ in the House of his Parents and Roman Catholicism is studied in Bowness, *Transactions*, vol. 22 (1972), page 127; and by Errington, *Social*, pages 27-29.

[Dickens], "Old Lamps," *Household Words*, vol. 1 (15 June 1850), page 267. In his *Contrasts*, a comparison of medieval and modern architecture, Pugin maintained that the superiority of the former over the latter was directly related to the fact that medieval architecture was the product of Roman Catholicism.


[Dickens], "Lamps," *Household Words*, vol. 1 (15 June 1850), page 266.


48 Anon., "Astronomical Examination Paper for the Catholic University by Primate Cullen," Punch, vol. 19 (October 1850), page 205. Dr. Cullen, the Archbishop of Armagh, was the primate of all Ireland.


56 Accompanying the negative stereotype of Catholicism was an anxiety concerning its political influence, which, as early as 1838, prompted Blackwood's to write that, 

"Popery, both at home and abroad, is in the possession of immense strength, and has been and is now marching forward with giant strides to its old ascendancy."

Anon., "The Progress of Popery," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, vol. 44 (October 1838), page 494. By 1850, "Popery" must have seemed much closer to the re-establishment of its ancient ascendancy. Throughout Latin Europe, and in Austria and Belgium, Catholicism had supported the suppression of popular uprisings and liberal philosophy, and had greatly strengthened its position in these countries. The close of
1851 saw the consolidation of Louis Napoleon's despotic government fully endorsed by the Catholic episcopate. Elie Halevy, A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century, 6 vols. (London: Ernest Benn, Ltd., 1927; reprint ed., 1961), vol. 4, page 326. While most Victorians rejected the revolutionary activities of 1848, and felt a marked relief when these were at last put down, they certainly did not view the subsequent increase in Catholic influence with anything other than dismay.

57Bury, History of the Papacy, page xxiii.

58Russell was Prime Minister between 1846 and 1852.


60The best-known and most elaborate of the many attacks upon the "Popery" of Anglo-Catholicism is, Peter Maurice, The Popery of Oxford Confronted, Disavowed, and Repudiated, (London: Francis Baister, 1837).

61Punch drew attention to the connection between Roman and Anglo-Catholicism, (which it called by its older name of Tractarianism), in a verse satirizing the ritual revival.

Though crosses and candles we play with at home,
To go the whole gander, there's no place like Rome;
We've statues and relics to hallow us there,
Which, save in museums, you'll not find elsewhere.
Rome, Rome, sweet, sweet Rome!
For all us Tractarians, there's no place like Rome!

Anon., "Parody for Puseyites," Punch, vol. 19 (November 1850), page 250. Despite Punch's implication, Roman and Anglo-Catholicism were not synonymous. While many members of the Anglican movement admired the Continental church, not every Anglo-Catholic did so.

62For a visual example of this idea, see Fig. 13.

63[Dickens], "Lamps," Household Words, vol. 1 (15 June 1850), page 266.

64It was later known as Puseyism; finally as Ritualism, and even; satirically, as Newmania. "Anglo-Catholicism" was the term most preferred by the group itself.

65[Dickens], "Lamps," Household Words, vol. 1 (15 June 1850), page 265.

J.T. Ward, "Young England," History Today, vol. 16 (February 1966), page 120. Later in his career, Disraeli was to remodel his political philosophy, involving himself in the 1867 extension of the franchise.


Ibid., page 695.

Ibid., pages 693 and 695.


Ibid., pages 266-267.

A few examples of its reforming stance are: [Charles Dickens], "Supposing!" Household Words, vol. 1 (20 April 1850), page 96; [Charles Dickens], "Pet Prisoners," Household Words, vol. 1 (27 April 1850), pages 97-103; and [Harriet Martineau], "The Sickness and Health of the People of Bleaburn," Household Words, vol. 1 (25 May 1850), pages 193-199.


Its circulation at this time neared 100,000. Lohrli, Household Words, page 23. Its nearest competitor, among those journals
which reviewed Millais's painting, was The Times, which had a readership of 61,000. Ellegård, Victorian Periodicals Newsletter, No. 13 (September 1971), page 4.

79[Probably Dafforne], "The Royal Academy," The Art Journal, vol. 12 (1 June 1850), page 175. Though itself dating from before Raphael, Greek art was not viewed in the same light as was medieval art.


81[Frederick Hardman], "The Pictures of the Season," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, vol. 68 (July 1850), page 82.


87Anon., "Fine Arts," The Guardian, vol. 5 (8 May 1850), page 336. Only The Spectator and The Times had already printed their columns, which appeared on the fourth of May. (The Times mentioned Christ in the House of his Parents again, in its ninth of May review). Since most of the journals which discussed the painting were monthlies, the bulk of the criticism did not come out until June.


89Loc. cit.


CONCLUSION

An ironic element emerges from a study of Christ in the House of his Parents in that it was a picture designed largely to please, and not, as its scandalized critics suspected, to provoke. While it is true that Millais's canvas, with its unusual mixture of medievalism, naturalism, typology, and Anglo-Catholicism did challenge fundamental aspects of the traditions of the Royal Academy, Millais had plenty of precedents for his departure from convention. As he could not have been unaware, the popularity of naturalism was already well-established in the genre painting so preferred by middle-class buyers, and medievalism, if not embraced by everyone, had at least found a public, as evinced by the works of successful revivalists such as William Dyce. It is most likely that Millais formulated Christ in the House of his Parents in full recognition of these tastes, which existed outside Academic definitions concerning the acceptable in art, and also in an understanding that Pre-Raphaelitism's dissatisfaction with traditional art was shared by large segments of the Victorian middle classes.

If his subject matter had not been religious, he might have gained the approval he sought, as had been the case with Isabella, his picture of the year before. However, he had neglected to take into account the fact that, despite their weaknesses elsewhere, the idealizing conventions of the Royal Academy remained firmly in place, insofar as religious imagery was concerned.
Even *The Guardian*, the single periodical which admired *Christ in the House of his Parents*, was so tied to the High Renaissance convention of idealization that it experienced difficulty with the picture's naturalism. The unfriendly critics were plainly unable to reconcile Millais's particularized forms with their ideal of the Holy Family. At best, they complained that the figures were ugly; at worst, they produced near hysterical responses which were grounded in their fears of the urban poor.

Millais's medievalism fared as badly as did his naturalism, provoking widespread assertions of the belief in progress, whether in the arts or the sciences. Ultimately, it was only when Millais decided to jettison his medievalizing style, and to avoid religious subject matter altogether, that he finally began to experience some of the critical and popular acclaim which was so conspicuously absent from the response to *Christ in the House of his Parents*. 
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"The Royal Academy Exhibition." The Builder 8 (1 June 1850): 256.


APPENDIX B: ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1, and detail

John Everett Millais, Christ in the House of his Parents, 1850
The Tate Gallery, London
Figure 2. Robert Campin, The Merode Altarpiece, c. 1426
The Cloisters Collection, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

(Frinta Mojmir. The Genius of Robert Campin.
Figure 3. John Everett Millais, *Sketch for Christ in the House of his Parents*, 1849
The Tate Gallery, London

Figure 4. John Everett Millais, Sketch for *Isabella*, 1848
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Figure 5. John Everett Millais, *Isabella*, 1849
The Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool

Figure 6. John Rogers Herbert, Our Saviour Subject to his Parents at Nazareth, 1847-1856
The Guildhall Art Gallery, London

Figure 7. John Everett Millais, *Sketch for The Benjaminites Seizing Their Brides*, c. 1840

Present location of sketch, and finished version of 1845 unknown.

Figure 8. William Holman Hunt, Christ and the Two Maries, 1847
Present location unknown.

Figure 9. George Frederic Watts, *The Good Samaritan*, 1850
The Courtauld Institute of Art, London
Figure 10. F.R. Pickersgill, Samson Betrayed, 1850
Manchester City Art Gallery, Manchester
Figure 11. Charles Eastlake, *The Good Samaritan*, 1850
Royal Collection, Osborne House,
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Figure 12. William Dyce, The Meeting of Jacob and Rachel, 1850
Present location unknown. This engraving appeared in The Art Journal, in 1860.

Figure 13. [John Leech], The Cat's Paw; or, Poor Pu(s)ssey, 1850
Punch 19 (November 1850): 247.