1. Introduction

While at work in Jerusalem on "The Shadow of Death", William Holman Hunt wrote to his friend Frederic Stephens that he was "hoping now or never to prove what my powers as an artist are". He added that if he failed to justify his claim to be a major painter, old as he was, he "should look for some other profession". The reviews accorded to his picture upon its exhibition in London certainly suggest that he had established his position as an artist. The Athenaeum for January 1873, for instance, asserted "The Shadow of Death" "to be not only the noblest and best of Mr. Hunt's pictures, but one of the masterpieces of modern art." A later review in this same periodical exclaimed enthusiastically:

1 21 June 1870 (Bodleian MS. Don. e67).
I would like to thank the authorities of The John Rylands University Library of Manchester and the Bodleian Library for allowing me to inspect and publish manuscripts in their possession. I am most grateful to Diana Holman-Hunt, who holds copyright on her grandfather's manuscripts, for granting permission to print these materials.

In editing Holman Hunt's letters and diaries for use within the following pages, I have silently emended and regularized his spelling and punctuation, though I have only changed his capitalization when he begins a sentence with a letter in the lower case. He frequently uses American, rather than British, orthography, writing "color", for example, rather than "colour"; and I have changed this spelling to match that in his published works. Similarly, although Holman Hunt writes "Raffaelle"—and at least three other versions of the artist's name—I have chosen to adopt "Raphael", which appears in his printed works. The painter's most common punctuational device is a dot placed in the position of a dash. It may signify a dash, a comma, a period, a semi-colon, or merely that the writer rested his pen while gathering his thoughts. While making as few changes as possible and employing dashes whenever they seem intended, I have provided whatever punctuation seems necessary. All other changes, such as obviously omitted words, have been supplied in brackets.

2 "Mr. Holman Hunt's Picture", 2358 (4 January 1873), 23.
We are convinced that not for many years past, if at all, has a single male nude, or nearly nude, figure such as this been painted with anything approaching the learning, labour, solidity and beauty shown here. . . . The life-sized nude figure has been much too difficult a matter for our imperfectly-trained artists to deal rashly with. But this superbly-painted figure is quite beyond praise. . . . Severe and learned drawing, faithfully practiced, as in this case, is, nowadays, very rare indeed in Europe, and extraordinarily rare among us. When combined with modelling so sound, beautiful and complete as that shown here, it is one of the rarest of all artistic achievements.¹

Although The Spectator did not approve of the painting's "realism", it nonetheless thought it a "great picture" and asserted that "nothing in our National Gallery can exceed the force and beauty of the drawing of this picture, the moulding of the limbs, the blending of the colours, the various effects of posture and form".² Even The Times, which in the early days of Pre-Raphaelitism had so lambasted Holman Hunt, now admitted that "all candid and competent critics, whatever their predilections or prejudices, will, we believe, agree that here is one of those works of which few are produced in a generation, embodying all that the artist can bring to his labour, from the very depth of his thought, conscience, feelings, and will. Such works should only be approached with the deepest respect."³ Holman Hunt had thus apparently won his battle—a battle waged against himself, his materials, and his public. He had established his position as an important artist by means of a subject picture that combined realistic style and elaborate symbolism.

Since "The Shadow of Death" was a critical as well as a popular success, one can conclude that the public had at last accepted Holman Hunt's ideas of art. If one did not know how consistent was his career, one might be tempted to wonder whether public or painter had been the one to change. But, as Blackwood's justly observed in 1886, some thirteen years after he had exhibited "The Shadow of Death", William Holman Hunt's "art is singular for unity and sequence: it is indeed so

¹ "'The Shadow of Death', 2405 (29 November 1873), 703.
² "A Layman on Mr. Holman Hunt's New Picture", 46 (29 November 1873), 1497.
³ "Mr. Holman Hunt's 'Shadow of Death'" (2 December 1873), 4.
homogeneous as hardly to admit of division into periods." 1 With but the slightest of qualifications this judgement stands. The very uniformity of this artist's career makes the task of his student that much more easier and that much more interesting. One may well take "The Shadow of Death" as the central, the representative work in his career, and such consistency, of course, makes the demonstration of this assertion both easier and more meaningful. By concentrating upon a picture that achieved popular success, one can examine Holman Hunt's art within its intended social context, and then try to determine how well in fact his contemporaries understood him. This context, however, is not the only one that matters if one is to comprehend William Holman Hunt: for to grasp the complex purposes and effects of his art, one must also relate his pictures to his religious belief, to his particular use of painting in his own personal life, and to his conceptions of art as that which tests the conventional schemata of perception and representation. Furthermore, one must place "The Shadow of Death" within the context not only of his theories of Pre-Raphaelitism but also within that of his own work. Since, as we shall observe, this painting comments importantly upon his earlier ones—including "Christ with the Two Maries", "The Light of the World", and "The Scapegoat"—it provides us with a welcome opportunity to observe the fate of Holman Hunt's artistic programme a quarter century after he first formulated it.

"The Shadow of Death" perfectly fulfils Holman Hunt's original conception of a Pre-Raphaelite art, and our first task will be to examine precisely what such an assertion means. Then, after observing how important the act of painting was to him as a religious exercise, we shall consider the nature of his "realism" and the relation of "The Shadow of Death" to the earlier "Light of the World". Finally, we shall perceive the way Holman Hunt used typology and other forms of symbolism to solve many of the problems inherent in a realistic mode of painting.

1 "Mr. Holman Hunt: his Work and Career", 149 (April 1886), 540. This retrospective is apparently by the same author as the essay in The Saturday Review for 6 December 1873. See n. 4, p. 221.
The very name "Pre-Raphaelite" was a taunt thrust at Holman Hunt, Millais, and Rossetti by hostile or joking fellow-students at the Academy schools. When the young painters accepted the name, adding "Brotherhood" to it at Rossetti's insistence, they themselves turned it into a taunt against outsiders. "Pre-Raphaelite", then, was as much a gauntlet thrown in challenge, a war-cry, as it was a carefully thought out artistic programme. Essentially, it was anti-conventional and anti-convention. Since the Academy schools, the periodicals, and the public believed that painters—especially young painters—should follow the Rules, the Pre-Raphaelites wanted to see if they could create a more sincere, more powerful art by breaking them. In particular, they resisted the notion that painting had to employ pyramidal compositions, standard poses, stereotyped ideals of human beauty, and set modes of lighting. Thus, if Wilkie relied upon arranging his figures into pyramid-like masses in "The Blind Fiddler", then Holman Hunt would attempt an opposite method in "Rienzi", arranging his figures around the bottom and side of his canvas and thus leaving a triangular "hole" in the picture. Similarly, in "Claudio and Isabella" Millais would self-consciously employ unusual composition, archaic profile-portraiture, and consciously awkward gesture.

Although The Spectator praised "The Shadow of Death" for having moved beyond those days when the young reformers regarded "all the devices of composition as savouring of trick", this later work is in fact not much more conventional than his earlier ones. In particular, he not only avoids standard Academic compositional modes but he rather daringly employs two novel

1 Holman Hunt's Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, 2 vols. (New York, 1905), i. 88 n., remarks: "Wilkie's 'Blind Fiddler' is chosen as an excellent example of the principles enforced by academic rules; it will enable the attentive reader to trace the serpentine line as the ground plan of the arrangement of figures and salient accessories, and also the pyramidal forms of groups in the composition. As to the first and secondary lights and their relation to the tertiary lights and deepest darks, and also the cutting off of a corner by shadow, it is also edifying." There is a reproduction of this painting, which Holman Hunt once copied (i. 53), on i. 89. Hereafter his memoirs are cited in text.

2 "'The Shadow of Death'," 47 (6 December 1873), 1539.
poses: the figure of Christ stands with arms extended at shoulder-level in the oriental manner of prayer, while Mary, who looks at the shadow cast upon the wall, presents the spectator with the back of her head. Clearly, one cannot move much farther from either Murillo's religious paintings or Frank Stone's beauty-book ideal of feminine loveliness than to show us the rear of her head! Moreover, when Holman Hunt painted Christ as a young Jew, he forced his audience to regard Him—and their conceptions of Him—in an entirely new light.

Similarly, "The Shadow of Death" characteristically makes use of intense, almost strident colour, demonstrating that Holman Hunt had in no way changed his mind about the relative value of colour and tonality. Like Constable, Turner, and Ruskin, the Pre-Raphaelites emphasized colour at the expense of chiaroscuro. Indeed, far more than their predecessors or the critic who came to defend them, they carried this opposition to extremes. According to Holman Hunt's memoir, *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, he learned to dislike the accepted conventions of rendering colour almost as soon as he became interested in the art of painting. As a young boy he wandered through the National Gallery, finally inquiring of a guard where were the Old Masters about whom he had heard so much. When shown a Sebastian del Piombo, a Parmigianinio, and two Murillos, their dark colours so took him aback that his face openly revealed his disappointment. The charitable museum guard tried, says Holman Hunt, "to understand my paralysed expression. 'Can't you see its beauty, sir?' 'Not much, I must confess.' I slowly stammered; 'it is as brown as my grandmother's painted tea-tray.'" Despite training at the Academy schools, such remained the painter's basic attitude towards colour.

His encounter with a Mr. Rogers, his drawing master, shows the kind of teaching he resisted. After the drawing master had seen one of his young student's attempts at landscape, he assured him: "You haven't any idea of the key in which nature has to

1(i. 19). Holman Hunt's anecdote, which is reminiscent of Sir George Beaumont's precept that grass should be painted the colour of a violin, shows how early he held attitudes agreeable to Ruskin and the later Brotherhood.
be treated; you must not paint foliage green like a cabbage; that'll never do. ... Constable, who is just lately dead, tried to paint landscape green, but he only proved his wrong-headedness" (i. 25). Holman Hunt, who also proved his wrong-headedness, took his preference for colour over tonal value even farther than the great Romantic painter whom his teacher had held up as a warning against ignorant excess. Revealing a delightful sense of the comic, which this official memoir does not often allow to appear, he recounts how his instructor graciously showed him his own work as a means of leading him towards accepting the conventions. Having shown the young man his latest canvas, Mr. Rogers stepped back and explained: "There now, you see all the trees and grass, which an ignorant person would paint with greens, I've mellowed into soft yellows and rich browns." ... I could not say that nature ever put on that aspect towards me, but he said encouragingly that if I worked in the right way, an eye for nature might come at last" (i. 25-26). Like Ruskin, who stressed the painter's need to react directly and sincerely to nature, Hunt saw such an "eye for nature" as Rogers possessed only a dreaded form of blindness; and he willingly chose to remain an "ignorant" person. Such courageous individualism—such plain stubbornness—produced both the beauties of "The Strayed Sheep" and the hues of his often bizarre landscapes of the Middle East. Hunt was an extremist, willing to push theory to its limits in order to probe the capacities of art and artist.

The critical reception of "The Shadow of Death" is thus of particular interest, because it demonstrates that by 1873 reviewers were both well aware of what Holman Hunt was trying to do and they were willing to accept it. *The Athenaeum*, for example, pointed out he had chosen the difficult task of rendering mass and depth without recourse to chiaroscuro. Hence the impressive effect of the nobly designed and magnificently painted figure of Christ ... is not less startling because the picture is devoid of contrasts of light and shade, such as painters usually adopt; in fact, it is due, not to such contrasts, but to the intensity of the lighting which pervades it. In an effulgence like this, every element of the work required to be painted with the utmost care and solidity: nothing short of unflinching studies such as those of Mr. Hunt could secure success in such an
effect as this. It will be understood that breadth of effect is given here by means of light, more than by light and shade.¹

In addition to thus praising Holman Hunt for successfully rendering form with his rather unconventional mode, the reviewer comments that although "the colour is in a very high and splendid key", the spectator is not "shocked by garish discords or crude tinting."² In other words, although this reviewer admits that Holman Hunt's hues assault the spectator's eyes, that unusual assault is not at all displeasing.

Not all the reviewers agreed. Sidney Colvin, writing for *Macmillan's Magazine*, clearly thought the effect was too harsh when the painter chose to depict "the very blaze of an Oriental day near its decline flooding the canvas. Keen golden and rosy light strikes hard upon the face of every object, throwing pale purple shadows where it is interrupted." The hills of Galilee, which appear through a window, receive the same intense hues, while the carpenter's shop "overflows" with such golden light—"there is no rest from it".³ Colvin, whose other comments make it obvious that he does not much care for Holman Hunt's work, was here rather unusual among the reviewers, for most were willing to accept the strange, intense colours of "The Shadow of Death". Indeed, whereas Colvin believed that Holman Hunt's primary virtues were as ethnographer and archaeologist, *The Spectator* praised him because his work showed the effects of both excellent "pictorial arrangement" and "intense and prolonged study of the effects of light" in the Middle East. One of the highest points of praise for "The Shadow of Death", according to this reviewer, was that "the painter has been careful in massing his colour, and echoing the several tints coursing throughout the canvas in such manner as to prevent the eye from resting too long on any particular spot."⁴ Thus, after a century of English painting that increasingly emphasized bright and occasionally garish colours at the expense

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¹ "'The Shadow of Death', 2405 (29 November 1873), 702.
² Ibid. 703.
³ "'The Shadow of Death', 30 (1874), 219.
⁴ "'The Shadow of Death', 47 (6 December 1873), 1539.
of tonal richness, the reviewers had generally come to accept this as itself conventional and allowable. Another factor, perhaps, in the reviewers' acceptance of Holman Hunt's palette was that they believed it accurately recorded the facts of an exotic country of which few spectators had any experience.

At any rate, twenty-five years after the beginning of the Pre-Raphaelite movement these representatives of public opinion found themselves willing to accept not only Holman Hunt's rather daring use of an almost horizontal light source but also his intense colour and lack of chiaroscuro. Furthermore, although there were some dissenting comments, reviewers also now accepted the painter's Pre-Raphaelite attention to detail, his novel means of depicting scripture, and his violation of received rules of composition, posing, and beauty. Wordsworth pointed out in 1815 that the original talent must create the taste by which he is to be enjoyed. A true romantic and an original talent both, William Holman Hunt managed to do precisely that.

**II. The Act of Painting as Religious Exercise; or Painting as Penance**

Holman Hunt characteristically sought to make his mark with a highly original subject that demanded he accomplish a technical *tour de force* if he were to have any hopes of success. We have already observed that in "The Shadow of Death" he employed novel poses, subject, composition, and lighting. In addition to these artistic problems, he decided he had to find an original, more effective way of painting Christ's head. On the way to Jerusalem he had written to Stephens that the challenge of painting heads held great attraction for him: "I get more and more interested in painting heads, seeing how intensely difficult they are to do really well and how very few successes of the kind there are in the whole history of Art." ¹ After his arrival in Palestine, he explained in a letter to Thomas Combe that he prayed to God for inspiration to solve the artistic problems in his ambitious scheme: "The principal difficulty I have now is with the head of the Christ. I must depend upon this to show

¹ 23 April 1869; Florence (Bodl. MS. Don. e67. Emphasis added).
people the personage it represents, for the originality of the treatment would lead people away from recognising it—yet I want to get in the head too much that is different from the conventional head, which always seems too weak to me. I have thus my need of God's help for which I pray as for bread.”

Eight months later, his diary records his continuing trials:

Am bothered much about the head for several reasons—the principal being these—the old masters never showed the teeth in their pictures. In most of the Christs a mere black patch is given for the open mouth, and certainly it was a bold way of escaping a terrible difficulty, for the teeth even to draw them properly are a serious task; and in a serious head to prevent them from giving a snarling look is what few can do. Now in my head, as I cannot bring my conscience under any circumstances to adopt the old masters' expedient, the mouth must be open, for I have all along tried the effect of the closed mouth and found it utterly inadmissible.

As this passage from his diary reveals, much of Hunt's difficulty in completing "The Shadow of Death" arose in his conception of the artist's task as a moral and religious experience. Having set himself a difficult problem, he increasingly felt it to be a moral and religious obligation that he solve it. Consequently, he not only believed that the finished canvas had to convey important truths about man and God but also that the act of painting was in itself a religious, devotional exercise.

The more one reads in Holman Hunt's letters and diaries, the clearer it becomes that for him painting "The Shadow of Death" was a bizarre combination of heroic battle, scientific expedition, and penance. The mastering of extraordinary difficulties served not only as a means of conquering a resisting public but also as a means of conquering himself. Near the beginning of his memoirs, Holman Hunt asserts that "all art of the past . . . declared that, where men in humility strove against their worst nature and diligently wrestled to express the higher truth, their work bore the character of a message from heaven" (i. 40). In this most Ruskinian interpretation of the religious and moral value of painting to the painter and audience alike, he has indicated the ideal he followed throughout his entire career. When one of his Arab helpers called him "Lord", he

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1 10 May 1871; Jerusalem (Ryl. English MS. 1213).
2 8 February 1872 (Ryl. Eng. MS. 1212).
explained: "I am not a lord. I am more like a monk or dervish. I would go [to the Dead Sea] just to explain to people in England . . . how awful is a place accursed of heaven" (i. 469). In truth, Holman Hunt does appear as monk, a dervish, a prophet during these years in the Holy Lands: a celibate cut off from the world of his contemporaries, he worked in the service of God against great difficulties—until the very difficulties themselves became part of the devotional importance of his work, since they were a means both of serving God and mastering his own lower nature, something which, for the puritanical painter, came to much the same thing.

*Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* relates many of his obstacles while at work on "The Shadow of Death". After re-acquiring his Arabic and getting his studio-home once more in liveable condition, he began the usually difficult process of trying to secure models, most of whom turned out to be unreliable, or if they were reliable were arrested for murder. Managing to defend himself and survive in a land where the local inhabitants every now and then massacred strangers was troublesome, as were the snakes, scorpions, and bewildering varieties of vermin that invaded his studio. His toothaches, lumbago, and other illnesses, some of them serious, made the work especially hard for him, but worse than all of these were the feelings of isolation and desperate loneliness that frequently brought Holman Hunt to the edge of despair.

The rather impersonal version of his experiences provided by *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* does not much mention this loneliness, but the letters and diaries are filled with it. As he wrote his Oxford friend Thomas Combe on 6 May 1870: "I grow quite out of heart at times with no one to speak to, no one to encourage me or to confer when my work goes wrong. I picture to myself every possible cause of failure by turns. Sometimes my subject seems a poor one. At times every other way of treating [it] appears better, and I don't [know] what to conclude, for I know that whatever it may be in the end, the London know-alls who write in the papers will find out how much better they would have done it."¹ Almost exactly

¹ Jerusalem (Ryl. Eng. MS. 1213).
a month earlier, he had written to the painter-poet William Bell Scott of his "desolate house" and how he walked "in dismal dignity about the unfriended rooms". This lack of advice and companionship made his painting all the more difficult: "One great trouble, indeed, is to know what to think of my own work. If I could show it to some one like yourself," he told Scott, "I might save much painful uncertainty." But he had no such aid, and he quickly fell prey to what Scott termed "a morbid distrust of his own great powers".

Such destructive self-doubt frequently appears in Holman Hunt's letters and diaries when he confesses his many failures to surmount his greatest difficulty—the painting itself. After long struggles to realize his conception of "The Shadow of Death" on canvas, he wrote to Scott on 30 September 1871, complaining that "this picture of mine treats me so severely that I am a miserable slave, with no time for anything but just the attempt to sustain life and strength enough to wrestle with my work, which plays the part of a tenacious foe. I have engaged myself in a very difficult struggle, and I have been unwise in many ways in the battle." Truly, "The Shadow of Death" often seemed a fierce enemy that threatened to destroy him in a prolonged war of attrition. In this same letter, Holman Hunt confided to Scott that he had slaved so long over his painting that he feared he had now lost "that elasticity of mind so essential to one for triumphing over the final difficulties of a picture". Unfortunately, the difficulties he was encountering in the autumn of 1871 were hardly "final", since "The Shadow of Death" required another year's labour under equally trying conditions. Surely, Holman Hunt well described himself to Stephens as "so like Tantalus always failing in my aim".

In a letter of 12 October 1871, he confessed to Millais that his many difficulties had so worn away his first great expectations

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1 7 April 1870; Jerusalem. Quoted in William Bell Scott, Autobiographical Notes... and Notices of His Artistic and Poetic Circle of Friends, 1830-1882, ed. W. Minto, 2 vols. (London, 1892), ii. 88, 89. Scott printed several of Holman Hunt's letters from Palestine in full. The originals are now at Princeton University.

2 Autobiographical Notes, ii. 97.

3 Autobiographical Notes, ii. 102, 103.

4 24 July 1871; Jerusalem (Bodl. MS. Don. e67).
for " The Shadow of Death " that he now looked forward to nothing but its completion:

When I began my work I had very ambitious hopes about it, but like Browning's man who in infancy cried for the moon and in old age was grateful for the crutch on which he hobbled out of the world, I should be glad now to find it only done in any way. There are peculiar difficulties in the subject I have devoted my time to, such serious ones that had I only foreseen them I would have left the subject to some future painter. . . . I am like you in loving my Art very intensely now, the more it seems that I am denied all other love, but I am reminded of the remark of a little child who talking about love to her Mother said it pained so—my love for Art pains me—it hurts me sleeping and waking. There is no rest from it. . . .

If I had my life over again . . . I might of the raw materials I started my days with make out a satisfactory painter, but this life is made of wisdom and riches that come too late—the prize that boyhood sighs for comes when toys are no longer in request, that which youth covets is withheld till youth is flown—and so on to the grave. One must continue one's journey minus the means and weapons which carelessness or over-confidence rejected at one's place of outset. I think of the tale of the foolish Virgins who in going back came at last too late. One must go on now trusting the oil will last to the journey's end, though the lamp may not be so brilliant as it should be.1

The artist's diary for the next few months, which provides us with the opportunity to observe him at even closer range as he grappled with his subject, reveals in more detail precisely what were those discouraging problems about which he had written to his friends. His diary for 11 January 1872, for example, notes: "I leave off in some fear that the warm glow which I am tempted to give at sunset is rather more than enough."2 When he examines the painting the next morning, he decides that he must scrape away the pigment and begin again. Then, three days later, he is again shocked to discover that he has not yet solved the difficulties with the colours: "On turning my picture round to put it in the Sun it is a terrible blow to me to find my work on the arm of yesterday and indeed on the other hand very overcharged in colour and crude in modelling." These realizations left him "wrought into a state of feverish anxiety", but he assures himself that he "must not be hopeless but trust to Heaven". He apparently solves the problems with colouring but then meets new ones with the head of Christ. Despite the

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1 Jerusalem (Ryl. Eng. MS. 1216).
2 Ryl. Eng. MS. 1212. All the quotations from the 1872 diary which follow come from this manuscript.
Holman Hunt, "The Shadow of Death".

[By permission of the City of Manchester Art Galleries.]
Holman Hunt, "The Light of the World".

[By permission of the Warden and Fellows of Keble College, Oxford.]
fact that "cold almost paralyses" his fingers, Hunt records on 10 February that he worked "hungrily almost feverishly" as he fell prey to more "feverish anxiety". He then realizes that he may not be able to complete the painting quickly after all. For a time the doubts and anxiety, he confides, "seem to paralyse my hand", but he rereads his 1855 diary, \(^1\) "which shows me what great difficulties I had then in this place", and is somewhat cheered. Unfortunately, rendering the head of Christ continues to give him great difficulties, for once he solved the problem of pose and expression he found that he was still not satisfied with the scale of Christ's head. Then, on 3 March he decided he must change the face—"a necessity . . . which I fear destroys my chance of getting my work done for this season. How terribly I suffer at this admission!" After working eleven more days on the face, Holman Hunt once again perceives that he has failed:

The terrible suspicion comes into my mind that the head is still too large. [I] turn the picture upside down and am confirmed in this suspicion [and] begin to correct it at once—but not without much miserable humiliation at thus leaving off a day's work which I hoped would nearly finish my picture. In the evening I see that I have to decrease the head still further, but am glad that I glory rather in having found out the fault and at the prospect of getting it right than sorrow at my past failings.

He despairingly asks himself, "When shall I ever get free from this heavy task?" And on 30 March he does "not sleep well thinking and dreaming of my evil-starred picture". On 7 April he similarly records "a bad night's sleep full of nightmares about my yesterday's work and the picture in general". By 20 May, he is "feeling that there is a curse on this picture". But soon afterwards he is done.

Such difficulty and consequent despair always characterized Hunt's experience in painting his important later works. For example, while working on "May Morning" seventeen years later in the far more congenial surroundings of Oxford, he confessed: "The picture is like a sandbank, and every day's fresh argosy is swallowed up without making the quicksands

\(^1\) See p. 224 below for a passage from the 1855 diary (Ryl. Eng. MS. 1210) in which he consciously stores up comforts for expected difficulties to come.
more solid... Oh, what bars are about one to cramp and cripple when the spirit is eager to do work that seems worth doing!"1 And while working upon "The Triumph of the Innocents", the painting he began on his next trip to Palestine, he encountered such continual difficulties that he finally came to believe that Satan was personally engaged against him.2

Many of the problems which he had encountered while painting "The Shadow of Death", he later believed, came from adulterated and improperly mixed colours purchased in England. On 11 December 1876 Holman Hunt wrote to Stephens about his discovery of the faulty pigments, concluding "I must therefore have used this damned colour on the Carpenter, and it was this that made me paint it all out so many times and nearly drove me mad".3 Consequently, Holman Hunt devoted a considerable portion of his time in later years to making other artists aware of the problems of poorly manufactured pigments, and he tried to organize artists to force the paint manufacturers to standardize their products, avoiding those practices that allowed the rapid decay of a completed work.

Nonetheless, however much such faulty colours might have contributed to Holman Hunt's difficulties with "The Shadow of Death", one must agree that he was in some part correct when he saw his career and its problems as a lifelong battle against impatience and carelessness. He explains in Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood that "by nature and the encouragement of my early painting-master, slovenliness was my besetting sin, and I was too impatient for result. To root out off-handedness is not to be done at one stroke" (i. 56). In fact, as he observed his continuing difficulties he wondered if it was to be done at all. Writing to his second wife Edith from

1 ALS to Frederic James Shields, 31 July 1889; Oxford (Yale MS. Vault, shelves, Hunt). I am grateful to The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University for permitting me to publish this.

2 On Christmas Eve, 1879 Dante Rossetti wrote to Theodore Watts-Dunton: "Holman Hunt all but saw the Devil on Xmas Day! He heard him holloa!! This is true." (Letters of D. G. Rossetti, eds. O. Doughty and J. R. Wahl, 4 vols. [London, 1965-7], iv. 1694.) Scott's Autobiographical Notes, ii. 228-31, prints Holman-Hunt's letter of 5 January 1880 about this incident.

3 Jerusalem (Bodl. MS. Don. e67).
Jerusalem, where he was at work on "The Triumph of the Innocents", he admitted that "to be a painter one must be a slave, although some painters manage to be so much less than myself. It is perhaps the fault of my want of systematic training in my youth, but we can't alter this now." One of his early letters to Stephens, which argues against the need for preparatory study, suggests how much Holman-Hunt's earlier attitudes and over-confidence may have created his later difficulties:

You know that it is not by any means a new idea of mine that all study, apart from that of the figure, unless required for a picture, is thrown away, and will therefore understand why I inquire as to your purpose in studying in the Abbey. If you are painting the background of a picture I shall be delighted to hear it, but if you are only doing it for study's sake, it seems to me that you are studying what your studying will hinder you from ever making use of. Perspective is certainly one of the least things one requires, however important comparatively [sic], when considered in relation to drawing, designing and painting—but these even should not be practiced except for a purpose. No great painter, good or bad, ever wasted his time and energies upon preparatory work longer than was necessary to give him a rude power of expressing his thoughts. Look at Giotto, Raphael, Leonardo, M[ichel] Angelo, Hogarth and the others, who left works executed before they had arrived at manhood. It is true that most of them drew from the life after that (and this we should all do, I wish I could), but with the exception of this practice depended entirely upon that furnished by their pictures. It is as vain to attempt to learn how to paint a picture by considering each thing separately, before intending to commence, as it would be to attempt to learn to swim without going into the water.

The impression created by those diaries Holman Hunt later kept while at work on his major pictures was that he had jumped into deep water while still learning to swim. In particular, when coming across his many complaints about the problems he had with scale and perspective, one feels that he might well have devoted more time to preliminary work and to studies during his earlier days, so that when he came to work upon a major picture he would not have had to solve so many problems at the same time.

Of course, part of Holman Hunt's dislike of studies comes from his essentially romantic theory of art, which holds that the specific moment, place, and atmosphere can be depicted only on the spot: thus he painted "The Light of the World" by

1 7 June 1877 (Ryl. Eng. MS. 1215).
2 N.d. (Bodl. MS. Don. e66).
moonlight, "The Scapegoat" by the shores of the Dead Sea, and "The Shadow of Death" in the sunset light of Jerusalem. Furthermore, his attitude towards the necessity of labour—his conviction that he as artist could succeed only by the sweat of his brow—clearly affected his taste in art and his own choice of a style. Indeed, it seems clear that a major reason he chose the extraordinarily difficult wet-ground method of painting was that it prevented him from skimping in any way with his work as an artist. One must conclude, certainly, that if Holman Hunt did have some impatience and carelessness in his nature, few artist's lives show fiercer battles to overcome such traits. His religious belief enabled him to hold the conviction that if he could thus conquer his "lower nature", his art could become prophecy. When we examine his own descriptions of how he came to paint "The Light of the World", we shall see the way he acquired his conviction.

III. The Relation of "The Light of the World" to "The Shadow of Death"

"The Shadow of Death" comments implicitly upon "The Light of the World", which William Holman Hunt had completed two decades before. In this later attempt to create an original representation of Christ that could speak to his Victorian contemporaries, he tried to solve some of the artistic and religious questions the earlier painting had posed. Thomas Carlyle's harsh judgement of "The Light of the World" seems to have convinced the artist that his work had some major shortcomings which a new approach could remedy. In particular, "The Shadow of Death" presents Holman Hunt's second thoughts about the basic conception, audience, and symbolism of his earlier painting. "The Light of the World" is also related to "The Shadow of Death" in several other important ways: it records the artist's conversion to the extremely personal, emotional form of Protestant Christianity that henceforth proved the chief motivating factor in his career, and the force that prompted him to return to the Middle East to paint Christ as a carpenter. Furthermore, as a direct expression of his newly recovered
religious faith, "The Light of the World" presented for the first time Holman Hunt's attempts to create a new, more relevant pictorial symbolism that could revivify religious art.

Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood relates at length how Holman Hunt designed and had made the lantern which Christ holds, and how he painted the picture by moonlight, but this extremely reserved memoir does not much indicate the major importance of this picture to the artist himself. Those interested in William Holman Hunt's life and work are therefore fortunate that William Bell Scott included in his own reminiscences a letter from his friend that explains how "The Light of the World" had been a turning point in his artistic and spiritual history. Knowing the information would please his then ailing friend, Scott had written that a clergyman in a remote Ayrshire parish had preached a sermon on the text, "Behold I stand at the door and knock", making extensive use of "The Light of the World", which he had interpreted detail by detail to his humble congregation. Delighted with Scott's report, Holman Hunt confided that this "lesson" came "when I was young, and I had myself been much in want of some certainty as to whether there was indeed a Master". He explained that he had set out to read the Bible critically in "great anxiety", because he wanted neither to accept contemporary scepticism solely because it was fashionable, nor yet "to be hoodwinked by desire" into belief:

Youth offered me bribes on both sides—pleasures of the material or of the spiritual kind—and as I was weighing all I came upon the text, "Behold..." If I had ever read Longfellow's translation of Lopes de Vega's Sonnet, I did not remember it; but the figure of Christ standing at the door haunted me, gradually coming in more clearly defined meaning, with logical enrichments, waiting in the night—ever night—near the dawn, with a light sheltered from chance of extinction.

Realizing that the very sceptical Scott "will say that it was an emotional conversion", Holman Hunt assures him that there "were other influences outside of sentiment", though he does not state what they were.

According to Holman Hunt, then, this picture, of which he painted several replicas, records his conversion to a new Evangelical faith. Like Ruskin, he believed that the artist
could be a prophet as well as priest of God, and he evidently believed that when he painted "The Light of the World" he had been both; for as he explained to Scott: "I painted the picture with what I thought, unworthy though I was, to be divine command, and not simply as a good subject." Since he regarded his painting in such spiritual terms, he found its religious acceptance more important than its worldly success with critics and public. "Many times since that day" of conversion, he tells Scott, "when the critics as usual assailed it violently, I have been comforted by hearing of persons in sickness who knew not the painter's name, and troubled themselves not at all about the manner of its production, or the artistic question, speaking of the picture as one that had haunted them and given them hope—the hope that makes death have no terrors." Like the Old Testament prophets, Holman Hunt believed he could not take any credit for the message he conveyed to others; and therefore he considered his painting's success, he told Scott, not so much a matter for pride in his own powers, "as one of the testimonies—a very little one—of the greatness and necessity of the creed it illustrates".¹

Like *In Memoriam*, *Sartor Resartus*, and Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, "The Light of the World" is one of those many important Victorian works which centre on the experience of conversion. Students of the period's literature have long recognized that men as different as Carlyle, Mill, Ruskin, Tennyson, Froude, and Newman all borrow the form of the old Puritan and Methodist conversion narratives, making their own personal experiences serve as an example of ones who had survived the crisis and doubt of a tumultuous age. Similarly, Holman Hunt's painting draws upon its creator's personal experience of crisis and subsequent conversion to bring spiritual sustenance, succour, and salvation to his contemporaries.

"The Light of the World" is further representative of this important current of Victorian works arising in conversion experiences, because it, too, uses experimental forms to convey novel, intensely personal belief. Carlyle developed his strange,

¹ *Autobiographical Notes*, ii. 310-13.
wonderful satirico-prophetic fictional form to convey his own experiences of the Everlasting No, the Centre of Indifference, and the Everlasting Yea. Tennyson dissolved the form of the elegy into more than a hundred separate lyrics, each of which conveys truth from a different point of view and a different instant of time. In *Praeterita* Ruskin created a memory-fugue, a series of conversions and epiphanies that anticipates and greatly influenced Proust's more famous attempt to recapture the past and its meanings. Similarly, in its attempt both to create the experience of its creator's religious vision and to offer the public a new form of what we may term meditative painting, "The Light of the World" utilizes idiosyncratic means to convey an intensely personal experience to others.¹

Holman Hunt placed particularly strong emphasis upon the painting's symbolism, which he assured Scott had come to him with the experience of conversion. The painter had long been deeply concerned with the problems of finding a symbolism and iconography that could speak to his contemporaries. Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood relates that when he was working on the never-completed "Christ and the Two Maries" in 1847, he had tried to find a symbolical language to replace that of the middle ages and Renaissance. He had complained to Millais of his difficulties, pointing out that the "language" the earlier masters had used "was then a living one, now it is dead", and to repeat either their iconography or compositions "for subjects of sacred or historic import is mere affectation". He went on to explain to Millais that in his picture of the risen lord, earlier painters would have put "a flag in His hands to represent His victory over Death: their public had been taught that this adjunct was a part of the alphabet of their faith". But by 1847, that language of faith, like the faith itself, had largely disappeared; and although the "art-galvanising revivalists" would certainly approve of his making use of such an older, once-hallowed convention, such painterly symbolism would be little more than that—the self-conscious use of conventions of a past age. In contrast, this "rebel"

¹ J. H. Buckley, *The Victorian Temper* (Cambridge, Mass., 1951) presents the classical statement of this idea.
wanted a symbolism that could speak to the nineteenth century (i. 84-85). As it turned out, Hunt gave over the painting when he, Millais, and Rossetti banded together to form the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Once they had decided that they would abandon all conventions they did not sincerely believe, Holman Hunt discovered “I could not justify as according with my sincerest convictions . . . the painting of Christ with the ‘Two Mariæ’” (i. 172).

But when the text “Behold I stand at the door and knock” came as an answer to his anxious questioning, he found that a new symbolism came with it. In Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood he thus explains the details of “The Light of the World” to his readers:

The closed door was the obstinately shut mind, the weeds the cumber of daily neglect, the accumulated hindrances of sloth; the orchard the garden of delectable fruit for the dainty feast of the soul. The music of the still small voice was the summons to the sluggard to awaken and become a zealous labourer under the Divine Master; the bat flitting about only in darkness was a natural symbol of ignorance; the kingly and priestly dress of Christ, the sign of His reign over the body and the soul, to them who could give their allegiance to Him and acknowledge God’s overrule. In making it a night scene, lit mainly by the lantern carried by Christ, I had followed metaphorical explanation in the Psalms, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path,” with also the accordant allusions by St. Paul to the sleeping soul, “The night is far spent, the day is at hand” (i. 350-1).

For the painter it was a matter of great importance that the iconography of the picture “was not based upon ecclesiastical or archaic symbolism, but derived from obvious reflectiveness”. According to Holman Hunt, his symbols “were of natural figures such as language had originally employed to express transcendental ideas” (i. 350)—in other words, he believed that “The Light of the World” created its symbolic language in precisely the same way that men had formed language to express abstract and spiritual ideas. The important point is that, since the symbolism derives from what he takes to be essential habits of mind, it would be immediately comprehensible to any audience, since such “natural” symbolism does not require any knowledge of iconographic traditions. Nonetheless, since his method was unusual, he had worked “with no confidence”
that his symbols would interest anybody else. The fact that "The Light of the World" has "in the main been interpreted truly" without any additional assistance from him convinced Holman Hunt that his method had been successful (i. 351).

Whether or not one can share either Holman Hunt's conviction of his picture's importance or his spiritual and artistic delight in its symbolism, there is no doubt that he sincerely believed "The Light of the World" recorded a vision of God that had saved him from spiritual anguish. To him the painting represented a divine message, and he believed that he had a "divine command" to convey it to his contemporaries. In all this, William Holman Hunt seems to match both the Carlylean and Ruskinian descriptions of the prophet-seer. Ironically, Thomas Carlyle would not accept that the picture was sincere, and his harsh, yet astute criticism importantly affected the artist's later works. Carlyle, who had been enthusiastic about the Pre-Raphaelite attack on conventionalities in art, praised "The Awakening Conscience", but for "The Light of the World" he had only this criticism:

You call that thing, I ween, a picture of Jesus Christ. Now you cannot gain any profit to yourself, except in mere pecuniary sense, or profit any one else on earth, in putting into shape a mere papistical fantasy like that, for it can only be an inanity, or a delusion to every one that may look on it. ... Do you ever suppose that Jesus walked about bedizened in priestly robes and a crown, and with yon jewels on his breast, and a gilt aureole round His head? Ne'er crown nor pontifical robe did the world e'er give to such as Him. Well—and if you mean to represent Him as the spiritual Christ, you have chosen the form in which He has been travestied from the beginning by worldlings (i. 355).

Carlyle was hardly a knowledgeable critic of painting. In fact, his remarks in letters and diaries consistently reveal an astonishing insensitivity to the arts. Nonetheless, he here makes some pertinent points that Holman Hunt apparently took to heart. Carlyle was well aware of the way men perceive literal and symbolic meanings and how the two affect each other. His chief argument against "The Light of the World" is that its symbolism, however understandable to the mass of men, emphasizes just those things which will mislead them in the nineteenth century: what is important to the Victorian age is an image of Christ, not as king, but as Man.
According to the author of *Sartor Resartus*, what his contemporaries yearn for is an image of Christ, a re-presentation of Him, in which they can believe sincerely. Holman Hunt had once told Augustus Egg, the painter who befriended the Pre-Raphaelites, that he wanted “to make more tangible Jesus Christ’s history and teaching. Art has often illustrated the [Gospel] theme, but it has surrounded it with many enervating fables, and perverted the heroic drama with feeble interpretation” (i. 349). Carlyle, who had charged Holman Hunt with doing precisely those things he opposed, apparently well restated the artist’s own purpose. Even though Holman Hunt remained convinced that his art was sincere and, more important, that it was divinely inspired, he must have accepted his critic’s positive suggestions for religious art, since his later work, particularly “The Shadow of Death”, so closely follows Carlyle’s demands.

According to Holman Hunt, the Victorian seer had dismissed the images of Christ created by Leonardo, Raphael, Michelangelo, and other old masters, because he much preferred his own conception: “I see the Man”, said Carlyle, “toiling along in the hot sun, at times in the cold wind, going long stages, tired, hungry often and footsore, drinking at the spring, eating by the way, His rough and patched clothes bedraggled and covered with dust, imparting blessings to others which no human power... was strong enough to give to Him... doing battle with that valiant voice of His, only against the proud and the perverse, enchanting the simple by His love and lovableness, and ever disenchanting such as would suppose that the kingdom of heaven that he preached would bring to Him or His adherents earthly glory or riches. ... This was a man worth seeing the likeness of, if such could be found” (i. 358-9). Dürer, adds Carlyle, was the only painter who had some “gleam of penetration in him” (i. 359) of the conception of Christ as working, striving, *heroic* man.

This preference for the great German artist may well have turned Holman Hunt’s attention toward his work when he attempted, once again, to portray an adult Christ. Indeed, comparing Dürer’s self-portraits with the figure of Christ in “The Shadow of Death”, one cannot help drawing the
conclusion that he clearly influenced Holman Hunt. Indeed, Holman Hunt's debt appears so obvious that he may even have expected a comparison to be drawn between his own canvas and those of Dürer. The fact that the Pre-Raphaelite painted from a specific model whom we can identify in no way precludes such influence: Dürer's self-portraits could easily have guided the later painter's choice of a model. At any rate, Holman Hunt so liked this conception of Christ as a virile man with long, wavy hair that he used it again in "The Beloved" (1898), painted near the close of his career.

We do know that the painter was thinking about Dürer while in Jerusalem at work on "The Shadow of Death", since he comments upon him to Scott, who had just written a biography of this artist. Rather strangely, Holman Hunt's thoughts on Dürer are not at all what one might expect, for he displays singularly little enthusiasm for the artist who would appear to have been so influential. He wrote to Scott on 7 April 1870, for instance, that the German "seems to me a greater man as a designer for engraving than in painting. All that I saw of him in Italy disappointed me. I had imagined much more perfect drawing and painting too than I found." Since the young Pre-Raphaelite band had been particularly attracted to his graphic works, such preference is perhaps understandable: Holman Hunt himself would have found especially compelling Dürer's combination of an elaborate symbolism with realistic technique in "The Knight and Death" and "Melancholia"—two of Ruskin's own favourites. Nonetheless, it is rather puzzling that Holman Hunt's only known comment about Dürer's self-portraits is so disparaging. In a letter dated 23 November 1875—two years, that is, after he completed "The Shadow of Death"—he wrote to Stephens from Nuremberg that "Albert Dürer is more a perplexing mixture of poetical coxcomber and most grave of human earnestness—and even dire grimness—without the particular power to make me feel enchanted, or entranced. I feel interested and entertained with delightful poetical imaginations, but I am never absorbed as I am with Tintoretto, M[ichel]

1 Autobiographical Notes, ii. 91.
A[ngelo], L[eonardo] da V[inci], or Raphael, nor fascinated and satisfied as I am with Titian and Bellini. His coxcomb element I trace in his portrait with his long weak ringlets."¹ Thus, perhaps rather oddly, the one picture of Dürer which seems to have a specific influence upon Holman Hunt's work is here the subject of a casual dismissal! Of course, one does not know how early he saw either Dürer's self-portraits or their reproductions, but since the members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood admired him it would seem likely that Holman Hunt knew these works long before he came to paint "The Shadow of Death". But his comments remain puzzling.

A second effect that Carlyle's caustic attack on "The Light of the World" had upon the later painting would seem to be its portrayal of Christ as a worker. For the artist, one of the most important points made by "The Shadow of Death" was that Jesus was a carpenter—not a king, not an aristocrat or member of the middle classes, but a man who lived by the sweat of his brow—a man, in other words, like most of those in his intended audience. As he wrote in his diary shortly after he had completed the painting, he had been pleased when an old man, one of the poorest members of the community, came to see "The Shadow of Death". Whereas the Roman Catholics and High Church Anglicans had protested that to represent Christ as a carpenter was blasphemous, this old man "rejoiced that I had been sent by God to their country to paint such a picture and that I had allowed the poor to see it and thus learn more of his ways".² The painting met a similar reception in England: in both London and Oxford, "as in Jerusalem, the extreme Church party denounced it as blasphemous, altogether refusing to acknowledge that the record in St. Mark should be read as authority for representing Jesus Christ as Himself a carpenter". On the other hand, "when it was shown in the North it was hailed by artisans and other working men as a representation which excited their deepest interest. . . . This was exactly what I most desired" (ii. 310). Holman Hunt had wanted to paint a

¹ Bodl. MS. Don. e67.
² 12 June 1872 (Ryl. Eng. MS. 1212).
religious picture that would speak to the working man as well as to the connoisseur, and he succeeded.

Apparently, the picture made its point readily, for, as The Athenaeum commented in the second of two reviews devoted to "The Shadow of Death", "it requires but little insight to discover that our painter intended, as the didactic purpose of his art, to give, in this picture of Christ resting after labour, but still a workman in His father's house, an illustration of what he conceives to be the true dignity of labour. The 'labour question' is the crux of the day, and here is a probably unexpected study on it."¹ The Spectator, although not happy with the result, similarly perceived that Holman Hunt had "asserted a moral and religious principle peculiarly applicable to the social questions of our age".² Several reviewers commented that such treatment of Christ was highly original, for although both Millais's "Christ in the House of His Parents" and an earlier work by Mueller had treated the boyhood of Jesus with realistic detail, no painter before Holman Hunt thus painted Christ as an adult and emphasized His social and political position. The Times, for example, commented that "up to this day there is no picture representing Christ in full manhood, enduring the full burden of common toil. One of the problems of our age concerns the duty of the workman. The life of Jesus furnishes an example of the dignity of labour."³

Not all his public was willing to allow William Holman Hunt his interpretation of Christ. The Saturday Review, for instance, agreed that the shadow naturally suggests the crucifixion, but it refused to "follow the artist so readily when the endeavour is made to exalt the dignity of labour by representing the Saviour 'gaining His bread by the sweat of His face'".⁴ Clearly, many who saw the painting found deeply disturbing the notion that Christ was a member of the lower orders, a strong, sinewy labourer who lived and worked in a carpenter's shop. The objections of The Spectator arise rather obviously from complete

¹ "'The Shadow of Death'", 2405 (29 November 1873), 703.
² "'The Shadow of Death'" (6 December 1873), 1538.
³ "Mr. Holman Hunt's 'Shadow of Death'" (2 December 1873), 4.
⁴ "Mr. Holman Hunt's 'Shadow of Death'". 36 (6 December 1873), 728.
unwillingness to accept that Christ could have been a peasant. Thus, it describes Holman Hunt's figure of Jesus, not very accurately, as that of a man who "is apparently burthened with a heavy physique"; and it further argues: "Had the tradition been that our Lord was merely peasant-born, not of high lineage, that he attracted men by his piety only, and not by his calm authority, then such a picture would be in keeping with the tradition. But it is just the contrary... This is not the Christ; this is a peasant full of troubled hope and sanguine adoration." Since many Victorians refused to admit either that a worker possessed any innate dignity or that men from different classes were likely to resemble each other physically, they found this representation of Christ upsetting. Of course, in 1873, when a sallow-complexioned miner or Manchester operative was likely to be several inches shorter than a member of the middle classes, one can readily understand these objections. One can also see that an image of Christ as a peasant and worker would have had very unpleasant implications for some in the audience. But, like Carlyle, who preached his own Gospel of Work, Holman Hunt felt that it was worth the risk of unpleasantly shocking some spectators out of their complacency if in doing so he could both appeal to a larger segment of the public and point out a truth that many had forgotten.

IV. The Religious Significance of Holman Hunt's "Realism"

A third possible effect of Carlyle's criticism of "The Light of the World" is that it may have reinforced Holman Hunt's original bent for carefully detailed depiction of visual fact. But however much influence Carlyle may thus have had, the artist's first trip to Palestine played an even more important part in reconfirming the painter's adherence to his original hard-edged Pre-Raphaelite style. In general, his contemporaries were fascinated and much impressed by his uniformly elaborate rendering of all parts of his canvases. Sidney Colvin's long

1 "A Layman on Mr. Holman Hunt's New Picture", 46 (29 November 1873), 1498.
"THE SHADOW OF DEATH"

essay in Macmillan's Magazine, however, provides a dissenting note; and since viewers of Holman Hunt's work today are likely to react in much the same way as this critic, it is worthwhile to look at his criticisms. According to Colvin, Holman Hunt "shows himself a child of his age by attending first of all to geography and ethnology and archaeology and local atmosphere and local colour". He has devoted "iron toil" and great conscientiousness to rendering the facts of "The Shadow of Death" with great accuracy, but, though this picture displays fine composition, "forcible painting", and great artistic power, it was yet created in a mistakenly "scientific habit" of mind—in that "which insists on examining and verifying, point by point, the groups and sequences of things as they really are in nature and the past". In other words, Colvin (and here he sounds much like Ruskin) insists that art must portray, not facts themselves, but the way man experiences facts. The role of art is to render things in their phenomenological relation to man. Holman Hunt, however, has employed "analysis, research, and the circumstantial, which are indispensable to the satisfaction of a disciplined curiosity, [but which] are beside the point when it is the imagination which has to be touched". He has performed the work, charges Colvin, of "Societies of Biblical Archaeology". But he has not done the artist's task, for his excessive "circumstantiality" in the end distracts rather than pleases, chills rather than warms the imagination.¹

Although one must admit that much of Colvin's criticism of Holman Hunt's style of painting is correct, that criticism is more appropriate to some other works, such as "The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple", than to "The Shadow of Death". More important is the fact that one cannot fully appreciate his intention in thus carefully depicting the light, scenery, customs, and physical types of the Holy Land unless one realizes that for him these facts themselves had a major spiritual importance. His letters and diaries show that Holman Hunt's own encounters with the landscape in which the Gospel history unfolded continually enabled him to believe more fervently. Once

¹ 30 (1874), 219-21.
having experienced the settings of sacred events, he found himself able to imagine them more completely. His diary entry for 23 April 1855 exemplifies one of Holman Hunt's characteristic encounters with the places in which Christ had lived, preached, and died. Directly addressing "Sweet Nazareth of Galilee", he admits: "Never did I imagine thee so lovely in all the many times that I have tried to picture the abode of our Lord." He then withdraws himself from the landscape, and, like the writer of loco-descriptive poetry, meditates upon the meaning of that scene to him: "The sight of it this night crowds into my mind a thousand remembrances from the days of my school time when I first read the history of the Master who lived here humbly and in sorrow." This memory of his youth then brings to mind both "those bitter days when I lost my blind childish trust" and the later time "when again God brought me to kneel before Him".¹ The sight of Nazareth, it is clear, was a deeply religious experience for the painter, one that he believed brought him closer to God; for it not only allowed him to experience the unique beauty of the Holy Land but also prompted him to meditate upon his own personal religious history.

Some months later he used his diary to store up such spiritual treasure against the possible troubles of later years. After enjoying a particularly beautiful mountain landscape, he instructed himself: "Remember this scene, my poor, crippled, weak old Holman, you of 20 years hence to whom I write this journal if you then live. Think of these bright mountains, the clear sky, the deeper, clearer lake, the golden fields, and ... praise God for the blessings he vouchsafed to your eyes now dim and your strength now gone, and index all your life, saying how here and how there came the argument that leads you to the final wisdom and ... towards your home where there are many Mansions."² But twenty years afterwards, he was hardly crippled, weak, or very old. Vigorous as ever, he was back in the Middle East at work on "The Shadow of Death", and his letters indicate that his experience of the Holy Land remained as important as it had been when he first arrived many years before.

For example, he wrote to Millais from Bethlehem on 17 December 1869 that "when I first came, although I am not given to such a weakness at every well known spot . . . the tears came into my eyes, and out of them too, as though I had been a child or a senile old man". He confided to his friend that the sight of Bethlehem came as a religious vision which "affected" his understanding of the Gospel events he had "never seen" with his "physical sight": "for all the gospel history seemed to me as though it had been witnessed by me, and as if Christ had really been one of my friends whom I had seen hated and at last crucified, and even had risen again."¹ His intensely emotional religious experiences within the landscapes of Palestine were very precious to Holman Hunt, and they do much to explain why he braved such dangers and difficulties to return there and paint. His personal experience also explains the central importance that rendering the landscape, customs, and other facts of the Holy Land had in his art. His urge to represent scriptural history with complete fidelity to historical fact derives, therefore, not so much from a scientific or archaeological bent as from a fervent desire to convey to others those visual blessings that God had "vouchsafed" to his eyes—and thereby to enable the members of his audience to experience the truths of Gospel Christianity themselves.

In other words, Holman Hunt’s purpose closely resembles that of the Evangelical preachers who formed his own belief. The Evangelical Protestant—whether Evangelical Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, or Presbyterian—was encouraged to have what Bishop J. C. Ryle, the great writer of tracts, termed an "experimental", that is, experiential, knowledge of Christ: the preacher’s role was in large part to educate the individual worshipper by sermons to place himself within Gospel history. One was to imagine, to feel, to experience the story of Christ by bringing home to oneself His sufferings and teachings. Holman Hunt found that his encounters with the Palestinian landscape and its people gave him precisely such an imaginative vision of Christ. Thenceforth the idea that he should devote much of his

¹ Ryl. Eng. MS. 1216.
time and energies to enable others to have such experience greatly influenced the course of his art.

Nonetheless, he was well aware that his mode of religious painting would not appeal to all his contemporaries. In particular, men and women who held vague, unformed beliefs could not find agreeable his detailed renderings of scriptural history, which placed such an emphasis upon fact. Holman Hunt used a realistic technique hopefully to awaken the spectator's religious emotions, but his method also forced the viewer to confront the nature of his own belief; for he had to make up his mind, to decide whether or not the events had taken place. Many were unwilling to have facts so baldly thrust upon them. Holman Hunt had encountered such worshippers in the "clergymen who come here [to Palestine], who confess, perhaps reluctantly, their disappointment with nearly one voice. This feeling of theirs forces me to recognize that they cannot bear the actual realization of the subject. Their ideas are still mythical and vague, and thus it is difficult to regard them as happy and confident in their belief." Those who found themselves disappointed by the Holy Land, its inhabitants, and customs, he realized, were unlikely to react properly to his re-creations of them.

For Holman Hunt the religious and emotional dimensions of art were crucial, and therefore he would have been shocked by the accusation that his concerns were primarily scientific. In the same letter which complained about the clergymen of little faith, he emphasized the necessity of religion in life and art. He tells Scott, an unbeliever, that he had come to his conclusions only after careful "consideration of the effect of the two views (religion or no religion) on life. What is the reason of the dead-alive poetry and art of the day, if not in the totally material nature of the views cultivated in modern schools? Trying to limit speculation within the bounds of sense only must produce poor sculpture, feeble painting, dilettante poetry." He believed that without faith, art becomes materialistic, empty, literal, and dead,

1 Letter to Scott, 10 August 1870; Jerusalem; printed in Autobiographical Notes, ii. 93. He here emphasizes to his friend that seeing the setting of sacred history is no proof if one does not already believe. 2 ii. 95.
because such unspiritualized art can only present unmeaning facts for their own sake. This dread of unmeaning fact explains how Holman Hunt, who painted in such a supposedly realistic style, could emphasize in *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* that he and Millais always thought art had to express feelings and thus could never be “the icy double of facts themselves”. He emphasizes “we were never realists”, for he and Millais—much less Rossetti—never were interested in making “a representation, elaborate or unelaborate, of a fact in nature” for its own sake, because to do so would destroy the imagination, that “faculty” which makes man “like a God”. Moreover, “a mere imitator”, who thus does not make use of his imagination, necessarily “comes to see nature claylike and finite, as it seems when illness brings a cloud before the eyes” (i. 150).

Thus, we observe Holman Hunt fighting two different, though related battles: on one front he fought to popularize a realistic style of painting that could more effectively render both secular and scriptural subjects; while on the other, he struggled to find a means of keeping that carefully represented accumulation of facts from becoming a mere scientific record. According to *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, by 1856 one part of the struggle, the easiest, had clearly been victorious, for by then “many followers were admired chiefly for mechanical skill, and in some cases this was of a very complete kind, although wanting in imaginative strain. An increasing number of the public approved our methods, perhaps the more readily when no poetic fancy complicated the claim made by the works” (ii. 89). The first part of the battle had been won, and as such battles go it had been won fairly easily. But Holman Hunt’s concomittant aim of spiritualizing art never met with the same success, and, indeed, one suspects that many who looked at his paintings never realized he had this second goal in mind.

**V. Typological Symbolism in “The Shadow of Death”**

One means of preventing his art from presenting “nature claylike and finite” was to have it depict emotionally powerful
scenes from the Bible. A second, more complex, means was to employ elaborate forms of symbolism. As The Saturday Review commented about “The Shadow of Death”: “The attempt... is to elevate materialism by mysticism, and to make even the accessories of an inanimate realism instinct with spiritual symbolism.” Despite the writer’s phrasing, which suggests that symbolism can be infused or injected into a picture like a dose of castor oil, he is essentially correct: a major part of Holman Hunt’s concern with this painting, as with many of his important ones, was to create a modern pictorial symbolism that would solve the problems he found inherent in realistic styles.

The inspiration for such an ambitious attempt came directly from the second volume of Modern Painters (1846), specifically from a passage where Ruskin explicates figural symbolism in Tintoretto as an example of highly imaginative art. Describing the great Venetian artist’s “Annunciation” in the Scuola di San Rocco series, Ruskin emphasizes how “startled by the rush” of angel wings

the Virgin sits... houseless, under the shelter of a palace vestibule ruined and abandoned, with the noise of the axe and the hammer in her ears, and the tumult of a city round about her desolation. The spectator turns away at first, revolted, from the central object of the picture forced painfully and coarsely forward, a mass of shattered brickwork, with the plaster mildewed away from it, and the mortar mouldering from its seams; and if he look again, either at this or the carpenter’s tools beneath it, will perhaps see... nothing more than such a study of scene as Tintoret could but too easily obtain among the ruins of his own Venice, chosen to give a coarse explanation of the calling and the condition of the husband of Mary.

One’s first impression, Ruskin thus emphasizes, is of a powerfully realistic depiction of a desolate scene in which the separate details force themselves upon the consciousness of the beholder in all their coarseness and brutality—mildewed plaster, rough brickwork, crumbling mortar. We have encountered, it would seem, little more than the painter’s love of the picturesque. “But there is more meant than this”, Ruskin warns us, for if the spectator examines the composition of the picture, he will find the whole symmetry of it depending on a narrow line of light, the edge of a carpenter’s square, which connects these unused

1 “Mr. Holman Hunt’s ‘Shadow of Death’”, 36 (6 December 1873), 728.
tools with an object at the top of the brickwork, a white stone, four square, the corner-stone of the old edifice, the base of its supporting column. This, I think, sufficiently explains the typical [typological] character of the whole. The ruined house is the Jewish dispensation; that obscurely arising in the dawning of the sky is the Christian; but the corner-stone of the old building remains, though the builder's tools lie idle beside it, and the stone which the builders refused is become the Headstone of the Corner [Psalm cxviii. 22].

The typological (or figural) symbolism which Ruskin explains came as a revelation to Holman Hunt, since it solves the problems that troubled him. The symbolism, first of all, strikes the informed spectator as a natural language that inheres in the visual details themselves—and not something laid upon the objects in some artificial manner. Indeed, as Ruskin points out, the first clue to the meaning of "The Annunciation" comes from its composition, which naturally and necessarily guides the eye to those details whose comprehension releases one into a world of

1 The Works ("The Library Edition"), eds. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols. (London, 1903-12), iv. 264-5. It is worth noting at this point that Holman Hunt did not see the Scuola di San Rocco Tintorettos until 1869, when he first visited Venice on his way to the Middle East to paint "The Shadow of Death". On 23 July 1869, before he had visited the Scuola, he wrote to Combe that he was "disappointed with Tintoretto. His Paradise does not seem to me a great wonder. His miracle of St. Mark is below what I expected." But a few days later he continued his journal-letter more enthusiastically: "Yesterday I went to the Scuola di San Rocco and certainly there Tintoretto came out in glorious majesty, for the Crucifixion is beyond all comparison the finest picture I ever saw—the finest that was ever painted I will without any hesitation undertake to say" [Ryl. MS. 1213]. After arriving in Rome, he wrote Stephens on 7 August 1869: "Venice delighted me immensely... Tintoretto... certainly staggers. Sometimes his pictures are very little better than those of Benjamin West and Barry, and then you come upon a whole series finer than anything ever done in this world in colour, drawing, composition, and invention—not in finish, mind you" (Bodl. MS. Don. e67). Holman Hunt's enthusiastic encounter with the pictures of Tintoretto, which had already had an important, if indirect, influence upon his work, came at a time when he was planning "The Shadow of Death". Although neither of these two letters indicate it, the painter visited the Scuola di San Rocco in the company of Ruskin, whom he had happened upon at Venice. Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood relates how Ruskin, who had not looked over his interpretation for many years, stood before "The Annunciation" and read it aloud. Holman Hunt quotes the entire passage, adding: "The words brought back to my mind the little bedroom, twenty-two years since, wherein I sat till the early morning reading the same passage with marvel" [ii. 262]. Ryl. MS. 1216 contains Ruskin's note to him arranging their visit to the Scuola.
religious vision. The second aspect of this kind of symbolism is that it spiritualizes the most brutal fact, allowing the painter to concentrate simultaneously upon painterly skills and his deeper message. Typology, in other words, allows Holman Hunt to reconcile his love of detailed realism with his need to make painting depict the unseen truths of the spirit.

The artist almost certainly had known of typological interpretations of scripture, since they formed a popular subject of Victorian sermons, but Ruskin's application of this kind of symbolism to art clearly struck him as a novelty. Countless sermons and tracts taught the Victorian worshipper to read his Bible in search of types. A type is an anticipation of Christ. Thus, Samson, who gave his life for God's people, partially anticipates Christ, who repeats the action, endowing it with a deeper, more complete significance. Christ therefore fulfils the type, or figure, provided by Samson. Similarly, Solomon, wise in judgement, and Moses, giver of the moral or "old" law, are both types. Unlike allegory, which interprets one thing as in reality signifying another, typology traces the connections and similarities between two unique events, each of which are equally real. As Erich Auerbach explains,

the fact that a figural scheme permits both its poles—the figure and its fulfillment—to retain the characteristics of concrete historical reality, in contradistinction to what obtains with symbolic or allegorical personifications, so that figure and fulfillment—although the one "signifies" the other—have a significance which is not incompatible with being real. An event taken as a figure preserves its literal and historical meaning. It remains an event, does not become a mere sign. The Church Fathers, especially Tertullian, Jerome, and Augustine, had successfully defended figural realism, that is, the maintenance of the basic historical reality of figures, against all attempts at spiritually allegorical interpretation.

The medieval exegete, the seventeenth-century Puritan in England and America, and the nineteenth-century Evangelical

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1 For examples of popular Victorian scriptural interpretation, a selected bibliography of writings about typology, and a detailed discussion of the effect of this mode of symbolism upon Ruskin's thought and writing, see my Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin (Princeton, 1971), pp. 321-457.

all read the events of the Old Testament as wonderfully intricate parts of a unified scheme to anticipate the coming of Christ.

Since the nineteenth-century Evangelicals emphasized that all portions of scripture were equally valuable, equally relevant, to the worshipper, they had frequent recourse to typological interpretations. For example, the sections in Leviticus giving directions for proper ritual in the long-destroyed Temple confronted the Evangelical reader with difficulties: what did these long abrogated laws of another religion have to say to the Bible reader in Manchester and London? If, however, one realized that God had instituted the practice of animal sacrifice as a means of showing that man cannot live up to the moral law and needs some means of expiation, then it becomes clear that all these rites are anticipations of the Saviour—which God has recorded in scripture to allow the modern worshipper both to meditate upon the divine plan or scheme and to see how necessary was the presence of Christ in history. Perhaps because the application of types to Leviticus produced such dramatic results, demonstrating how even the most apparently barren lines in the Bible bear prophecies of Christ, it remained a great favourite of Evangelical writers of sermons and tracts. ¹ When Holman Hunt encountered a general lack of comprehension of "The Scapegoat" (1856), his problem simply was that he had the wrong audience in mind: the Evangelicals, who would immediately have understood his work, were in general unlikely to pay any attention to painting, while the art world had few who knew much about Evangelical readings of scripture.

The essential appeal, the essential feature, of typological readings of the Bible for the Evangelicals, who had a deep distrust of allegory, was that it stressed the reality of both the signifier and the signified. One, in other words, did not sacrifice anything in the Bible by realizing that it had a Christological import. Indeed, the direct result of typology was a habit of mind that emphasized meditating upon all the details of scripture, since all were real and all were importantly meaningful. This habit, in turn, led to the practice of "reading" events, things, and people.

¹ For an example of such use of Leviticus, see The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin, pp. 336-40.
as elaborate emblems—a practice most apparent, for example, in
the writings of Carlyle and Ruskin. What frequently gives their
writing such force—and occasionally the effect of arbitrariness—is
this practice of pointing to the unexpected as emblem. What
Ruskin and Carlyle try to do, of course, is make their readers see
more deeply, more perceptively, more imaginatively. This
emblem tradition creates some of its strangest results in Ruskin,
when in the fourth volume of *Modern Painters* he allegorizes the
laws of geology, finding in each of the main types of rock, not an
analogy, but a divinely intended emblem of human political
relations. Clearly, Ruskin wanted man to walk about his earth
meditating upon what he termed nature-scripture. Holman
Hunt's 1855 diaries reveal similar habits of mind. Writing of
the Dead Sea, he thus discovers it to be an emblem of sin, which
is beautiful at first glance but poisonous and deadly upon contact:
"The Sea is heaven's own blue, like a diamond more lovely in a
king's diadem than in the mines of the Indies, but as it gushes up
through the broken ice-like salt on the beach, it is black, full of
asphalt scum—and in the hand slimy, and smarting as a sting.
No one can stand and say it is not accursed of God. If in all
[things] there are sensible figures of men's secret deeds and
thoughts, then is this the horrible figure of sin... earth joys at
hand but Hell gaping behind, a stealthy, terrible enemy for
ever." ¹ One should point out in passing that this diary entry
clearly suggests how Holman Hunt intended the spectator to
interpret his Dead Sea landscape in "The Scapegoat". Not
all the painter’s meditative emblems, of course, were so grim.
For example, when he came to "the blessed Sea of Galilee
shadowless as a vision", he perceived it as both a foretaste of
paradise and as evidence of divine promise to the righteous: "In
the rainbow tints of the hills with the azure sky above, the clear,
glassy sea looks... like an opening in the earth with Heaven
showing through, or set there like a precious saphire, a precious
gift, an espousal gem to confirm a bridal of some more righteous
age." ²

¹ Ryl. Eng. MS. 1210.
² 29 April 1855 (Ryl. Eng. MS. 1211). In *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-
Raphaelite Brotherhood*, ii. 50, Holman Hunt writes similarly of the spring of
The habits of mind produced by thus interpreting landscape and the scripture produced a painting in which every detail was potentially meaningful. In "The Shadow of Death", for example, the artist expected the viewer to concentrate upon its details, gradually coming to perceive their meaning by what is essentially a process of meditation. This desire to create a painting that requires and prompts a meditative response does much to explain another attraction of Holman Hunt's style for him: since he desires to make the spectator meditate upon the smallest points of interest in his canvases, he can lavish great care upon each one.

On its most obvious level of significance "The Shadow of Death" is a visual image that prefigures the Crucifixion. As the pamphlet (apparently by the artist) which was distributed at the painting's exhibition points out: "the Divine Labourer pours fourth His soul in fervent gratitude to His Father that the welcome hour of rest has come... The Virgin Mother is represented as looking over the gifts of the Magi, the presents at the nativity... Her attitude tells of her fright and terror though the features are not portrayed. The shadow of the wearied Lord falling on the rack which holds the carpenter's tools, with the mandrel placed vertically in the centre, at once literally realises the form of a cross, and the hands fallen thereon suggest the idea of the fingers nailed thereupon, and thus the particular death Our Lord would die." Furthermore, the tools become types of those used to torture Christ, while the reeds standing in the corner of the shop similarly prefigure the mock sceptre thrust upon Him during His torments. Standing in a plank which Christ had been cutting, a saw casts a shadow upon the wall that clearly provides a prevision of the spear that pierced His side. At the foot of the sawhorse in the lower right-hand Capernaum: "There was no room for disappointment in looking into its bubbling waters, which were as clear as crystal, engemming the pebbles which flickered below, and harbouring shoals of sheeny fish, while around grew beautiful flowers and luscious fruit. It was a worthy emblem of the spiritual spring of life, which had its source in this region."

1 Quoted by Mary Bennett, William Holman Hunt (catalogue for the 1969 exhibition at The Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool), p. 49.
corner lies the scarlet fillet that is part of Christ’s head-gear: here is a more complex image, acting as both type and antitype. When the scapegoat, which Christian authors later took to be a type of Christ, was sent forth into the wilderness bearing the sins of the people, it bore scarlet wool upon its horns to represent that burden. When he was painting his interpretation of this subject in 1855, Holman Hunt commented about “the vagueness of the description in the Talmud: of the form in which the scarlet was placed on the head I feel it to be very much left to myself. So I merely place it round about the horns—to suggest the crown of thorns.” Properly speaking, the red headband in “The Shadow of Death” provides a type of the Crown of Thorns, while in a somewhat looser manner it recapitulates the scarlet wool borne by the representative of Israel’s sins, fulfilling that type in part. Of course, both types are only fulfilled completely by the Crown of Thorns itself. One should point out that this device also recapitulates Holman Hunt’s first attempt at figural symbolism, “The Scapegoat”, for the artist now attempts such forms of conveying his ideas in a subject more accessible to his audience.

Christ’s girded loins also suggests the costume of the Crucifixion, while the plumb-bob dangling from the rack of tools suggests Christ’s heart, because of its shape and placement within the shadow. On the windowsill sit two sets of objects, both of which are symbolic of the Gospel scheme: a scroll, almost certainly some part of the Old Testament, probably bears a text accepted as a standard typological anticipation of the Saviour. One, of course, cannot be sure without being able to read the scroll that such is its symbolic purpose, but since Holman Hunt uses this device elsewhere its presence seems likely

1 14 February 1855 (Ryl. Eng. MS. 1211).
2 Departing from orthodox usage, Victorian exegetes found types within Christ’s lifetime—as Holman Hunt is here doing—to signify either the events of the Crucifixion or of the second coming. For an example by a very popular preacher, see Henry Melvill, “Simon the Cyrenian”, Sermons (1843), 258-88. Both Millais’s “Christ in the House of His Parents” and Rossetti’s “Passover” use such types within the life of Jesus, a fact which suggests, incidentally, that Holman Hunt’s claim to have been the chief force in the Brotherhood during its earliest years is quite accurate.
here. Next to the scroll one finds two pomegranates, or passion fruits, long taken to be symbolic of the Passion of Christ. But here one must point out that, in the manner of many Victorian exegetes, the painter has moved from typological to allegorical modes.\(^1\) Two other details in the painting also act only loosely as types: the star-shaped window above Christ’s left shoulder suggests rather obviously the Star of Bethlehem, while the window behind Him creates a nimbus around His head. In the smaller sketch painted simultaneously with the larger picture, the painter had used rectangular windows, thus losing this effect. In the final version, however, he added the rounded window to create a nimbus, just as he added the scarlet headband, also left out of the earlier sketch.\(^2\)

We have already observed the importance to the painter of his conception of Christ as Divine Labourer, and we should also notice that this idea forms the basic or underlying theme of the picture’s symbolism. Mary has just gone to look once more at the gifts of the Magi, which suggested that Christ would have earthly power and glory. She looks up in time to observe—and be horrified by—a suggestion that, instead, He would die the basest of deaths. Since this contrast, which provides the main burden of the picture, so recalls Carlyle’s detailed criticisms of

\(^1\) Whereas in typology both signifier and signified are equally real, in allegory the signifier can be cast off like an empty husk once its meaning has been understood. Another difference between these two symbolic modes is that typology requires a unique situational parallel. Thus, strictly speaking, Moses is not a type of Christ; rather, “Moses leading the Children of God from Egyptian slavery into the promised land” acts as a type for “Christ leading men from spiritual slavery, sin, and ignorance into the heavenly kingdom”. Although writers often sound as if one person or thing may foreshadow another, in fact situation and action are also necessary to have a true type. In their love of seeking elaborate and unexpected types of Christ, many nineteenth-century readers of scripture so concentrated upon details that they unknowingly emptied their types of situational parallels and uniqueness. For example, when preachers frequently interpreted the incense required by the Levitical sacrifices as a type of Christ’s holiness or grace, they were using the incense allegorically to symbolize an abstract quality—something which exists in all time, and not a specific, unique action. Nonetheless, even when they allegorized in the guise of finding types and figures, Victorian interpreters maintained typology’s emphasis upon the reality of both signifier and signified.

\(^2\) This sketch, which the artist worked into a finished picture, is now at Leeds.
"The Light of the World", it appears that here, too, he had an influence. Carlyle, one remembers, had emphasized that Christ always disenchanted "such as would suppose that the kingdom of heaven that he preached would bring to Him or to His adherents earthly glory or riches" (i. 358). Furthermore, he had made fun of Holman Hunt's early painting for depicting Christ in those garments at which Mary has been gazing. Clearly, "The Shadow of Death" uses its typological symbolism both to redress the flaws of his earlier work and to emphasize the nature of Christ as worker and man of the people.

The reviews "The Shadow of Death" received upon its exhibition reveal that, although the picture was a decided success, few of those who undertook to interpret it to the public understood very much of its symbolism. All the notices pointed out that Christ's shadow on the wall was "a prevision of the Crucifixion"; but since the exhibition pamphlet underlined that fact, one can hardly conclude much about the critics' sagacity. Only The Saturday Review went at all deeply into the symbolism of "The Shadow of Death", though even it was rather sceptical about its effectiveness:

Not only does the shadow on the wall prefigure the agony on the Cross, but the tools, it is said, are so arranged on the rack as to signify the nails and instruments of torture. In the corner are reeds which refer to the mock sceptre of a king put into the hand at the time of buffeting. Again, the circular window which looks out on the evening sky is so placed as to surround the head as with a nimbus, while a smaller star-shaped opening is supposed to refer to the star which was seen in the East. We are not sure whether this ingenious elaboration of hidden meanings may be of the nature of milk for babes or meat for strong men... It may be admitted, however, that the painter passes from arbitrary and artificial symbolism to natural significance when, in the worn and weary figure, and in the heavy laden spirit, of the Saviour he gives a foretaste of agony and of death.

Thus, even though this reviewer himself perceived or learned elsewhere the typological significance of various details, he clearly shows himself out of sympathy with this method of proceeding and had little taste for the pleasures of such meditative-symbolical painting. I have been able to discover only a single contemporary notice that greeted the painting's symbolism.

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1 "Mr. Holman Hunt's Picture", The Atheneum, 2358 (4 January 1873), 23.
2 "Mr. Holman Hunt's 'Shadow of Death'", 36 (6 December 1873), 728.
enthusiastically: *MacMillan's Magazine*, which published Sidney Colvin's generally disapproving essay, also printed a fifty-line poem, "The Shadow of Death", by "the author of 'John Halifax, Gentleman'"—one Diana Mulock.¹ Her citation of other familiar scriptural types of Christ shows that she knew precisely what Holman Hunt intended. But, as we have seen, the lady novelist was rather unusual both in her understanding and sympathy.

Apparently, he did not meet with much more understanding from his friends. The complexity of figuralism was often so strange to many Victorians not educated in its use that Holman Hunt found it difficult explicating the attitudes he desired. To Edward Lear, the landscape painter and writer of nonsense verse, Holman Hunt wrote on 11 February 1873, trying to explain how his subject could have had a normal, historical existence and yet acted to foreshadow something else:

This is the proper place to answer one observation of yours, which you make on my view that the treatment is simply historic. I remember that I said the Virgin's attention was arrested by the Shadow as foreshadowing His Crucifixion, but this does not seem to me at all supernatural of necessity, for many other a reformer's mother has forseen without supernatural revelation that her son's career would end under the hands of the public executioner.... I never intended to suggest that it was not sentimental and poetic in its treatment, for if so I should have professed that it was without what alone makes artistic work interesting in my eyes.²

I take it from the artist's insistence upon his picture's being "simply historic" that he was having difficulty convincing his friend a type possesses its own reality independently from that it signifies. According to a typological view of history, a person (or situation) can prefigure the coming of Christ and the Gospel scheme without any supernatural interference or revelation. But Lear did not want to accept such a notion, nor, apparently, did he want to allow that an art making use of types could be complexly symbolic and deeply moving at the same time. Here he was probably correct: if, as recent writers on typology and allegory have pointed out, these symbolic modes require a non-emotional, distant, consciously intellectual attitude on the part

¹ 29 (1874), 226-7. ² Ryl. Eng. MS. 1214.
of the audience, then such kinds of symbolism would not seem at all suited to post-romantic art.

Characteristically, William Holman Hunt, who was always trying to test the capacities of painting, attempts an art that demands both an immediate emotional response and one that is meditative and analytical. In fact, a large part of this painter's interest for the twentieth century comes from his refusal to relinquish any aspect of painting: he wants to create an art that will be simultaneously intellectual and deeply moving, popular and able to appeal to an elite, objective and subjective. For example, refusing to paint only for an elite, he wanted, like Dickens, to have a mass audience; and yet he also wanted to revive iconographic traditions which would make such a mass audience difficult, if not impossible, to acquire. Similarly, Holman Hunt wanted to revive the capacity of painting to convey important truths of mind and spirit at a time when both the existence of these truths and the very notion of artistic referentiality had already begun to seem problematic. Increasingly, artists of the past century have tried to solve the difficulties created for painting by doubt and disbelief with an art that makes no reference beyond itself. Painting black squares on a black ground or red shapes on white may not make any important statements, to be sure—but then, it does not say anything false either. The painting of William Holman Hunt, in contrast, makes explicit, detailed reference to both material and spiritual worlds; for he refused to accept the loss of belief, cultural fragmentation, and sheer lack of confidence that made the Victorians the founders of the modern age. Considered in the context of Pre-Raphaelitism, then, Holman Hunt was the arch-conservative, perhaps the reactionary, who for all his bitter hatred of the medieval revival came closer to creating an art suited to the middle ages than anyone else. His art stands at one pole, while the art of Rossetti and Burne-Jones stands at the other: whereas they create art essentially without subject, art that concentrates either on conveying mood or creating abstract pattern, he holds to the older conceptions of painting.

Paradoxically, some of these things which make him seem such an anachronism also make him seem so modern. For
instance, in the manner of many moderns—in the manner, say, of Joyce and Eliot—Holman Hunt tried by sheer force of will to re-vivify traditions. More important, like so many in this century, William Holman Hunt is the man of an idea—an extremist who will make no compromise. Today, when sculptors send rough sketches to factories which then make "their" sculptures, the artistic programme is often more important than the art itself. Indeed, when the extreme originality of an artist's idea counts for far more than his technique (which in Earth Art or random constructions may not even be present), then this earnest Victorian deserves attention—if only because of the lengths to which he was willing to push his demands. William Holman Hunt's attempts to plumb the limits of painting, strange as it may seem, take their place in the foundations of modern art. An age which worships extremism in art should light at least a few candles to William Holman Hunt.