

## ST. MARTIN-ON-THE HILL and the MIDDLE AGES

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Ever since the title of this paper was announced, people have been coming up to me and saying: 'But St. Martin's wasn't here in the Middle Ages'. Of course they're right, and I think they know I know that. In the Middle Ages the site of St. Martin's was open field and, later, pasture in a place called 'Coldcliff'; and you don't need to be an etymologist to understand the derivation of that name. The vicious wintry breeze from the east blows on St. Martin's as it blew on medieval Scarborough. So what am I going to talk about?

I'm going to talk about language; to be more precise, a language which the Middle Ages perfected. It was a language of a Complex sort, a system of symbolism. Symbols are not letters or words, and you cannot write or speak with them. But, like letters and words, they allude to ideas. Letters and words are shorthand referring to basic ideas like a sound, an object, an emotion, a place, person or activity. A symbol is also allusive. But it alludes to more complex ideas, ideas which need more to explain them than one or two lines in a dictionary. To understand St. Martin's as a building you must first understand this language, for St. Martin's is itself a document written in this obscure and half-forgotten tongue, which came to full growth over 800 years ago.

In this talk, I shall begin by looking at the system (if we can call it that) of medieval symbolism, and how it came to be formed and forgotten. We'll then consider how it came to be that the architect and artists who built and furnished St. Martin's came to employ these ancient and arcane symbols. Finally we shall explore the meaning of St. Martin's by means of the dictionary and grammar of symbolism - so far as we can understand it. Note that I say '*so far as we can understand it*'. This is not merely scholarly caution. The fact is that much of the meaning in medieval symbolism is not written down

anywhere. It was simply understood, the way we ourselves understand the symbols we use without thinking of them or troubling to write them down. Does anyone know, for instance, of a directory of company logos? If it exists, it is only as a card index in the Patent Office; and I don't know yet of any comprehensive history and explanation of their use. Yet when we see the black horse, or the gryphon, we know whether or not we can use our cash cards there: that is, if the hole in the wall is working. Meanings of medieval symbol have been painfully reconstructed by generations of scholars and antiquaries, largely through examining them in their context, in carving or painting. The work is not yet complete and never will be - because the meanings and context of medieval artwork were not necessarily constant or clear.

With that warning in our minds we will go back to the 12th century, where the whole business begins, so far as it has a beginning. The impulse which created medieval symbolism had a lot to do with the increase of literacy experienced in that century. Why it happened then is not easy to say, but there is no doubt that by the middle of the twelfth century education (in Latin, of course) was available to all that wanted and could afford it. Schools were open and functioning in all major English and French towns. Besides that, a teaching profession had formed, indeed it was possible for a talented man to earn quite a lucrative living by opening a boarding grammar school. Bishop Robert de Bethune of Hereford, who died in 1148, began his career as a schoolmaster, and by 1130 had earned enough to buy clerical livings for his nephews, and husbands for his unmarried nieces. I hope they were grateful. The reason why people were so eager to learn the skills of literacy all of a sudden are debatable. What appeals to me is the explanation that, in the 12th century, it became understood to be a badge of gentility and good breeding to read Latin. The engine of social snobbery took care of the rest. If it was necessary to read to climb socially; concerned parents found the means to educate their young. The need and the money brought forth the teachers, and through social aspiration the mental horizons of these who counted in society were transformed. No other forces known to man could produce results as quickly as snobbery and parental concern combined. Society was transformed. The skills of literacy passed outside the bounds of clergy. Barons and knights were expected to be able to read and cast accounts. Peasants scabbled after the same skills as a way of social advancement. The lawyer, the oldest lay profession, had appeared by the end of the century. It has been calculated that

literacy in England in 1200 may have affected as high a figure as 13% of the population. Not bad for a third world country.

Such a fact could do nothing other than materially affect the way a society looked at itself, the world around it and its beliefs. There happened what is called the 12th century Renaissance. This was a complex intellectual movement which involved many different things, but one central fact united it: scholars and lay people were discussing ideas, whether religious, historical, or artistic, in a way not known since Classical Antiquity. Letter writing, written political manifestos and handbooks became a means of expression in lay life as much as in clerical life. It is therefore no accident that it is in this time that forms of religious expression in art stabilised. The naivety and eccentricity of early medieval art ended and stylisation began. This was because artists and writers were no longer shouting at each other as if from mountain tops, but were in a busy market place of ideas. So busy that, as in all markets, standardisation and packaging became necessary. To put it another way, the level of discourse and discussion had so increased that people now were able to reach common understanding of older symbols and both to refine their use and add to them.

The discussion and the achievement of common understanding was followed and reinforced by compilation. On ecclesiastical subjects the most influential compendium appeared in the second half of the 13th century. This was the *Aurea Legenda*, the 'Golden Legend' of James of Voragine, Archbishop of Genoa. It collected and compiled a mass of material on saints and angels and their attributes, and was used as an authority by generations of European, Catholic artists. Its popularity can be seen in the fact that it was one of the first books to be committed to the new technology of printing in the 15th century. English and Welsh writers were particularly active in writing about the deeds of their saints, and a particularly English contribution to the literature of saints and their attributes was the *Nova Legenda* of John of Tynemouth (also a book which rapidly found its way into print). A different sort of compiler, and contemporary of James of Voragine, was William Durand, a specialist in liturgy who had much to say of weight and authority concerning the layout of churches and the symbolism of their structure.

These men may not have been necessarily the great thinkers of the 13th century, nor were they original minds. Their work depends on older sources. But what they did do was to personify the spirit of their age. The renaissance

of which they form the rear-guard had conquered and carried off the learning of the Classical World and the Fathers. They were the mopping-up operation. They established the lines of communication of knowledge, the unvarying symbols which so characterise medieval art, and which the next renaissance was to overthrow. It fell to these men, and others like them, to produce the dictionary of symbols out of which we can read the meaning of the church of St. Martin.

But, St. Martin was not a product of this medieval intellectual movement, so how come it speaks its language? The words 'Victorian Gothick revival' which usually comprehend this phenomenon are not really adequate to explain the complexity of the forces which produced St. Martin's and many other such churches. In a sense near to basic this phenomenon was a revulsion from the Classical ideals of form rediscovered in the 14th century in Italy. And in that basic sense St. Martin's comes very close to the roots of the movement. For its artists are called 'Pre-Raphaelite' in inspiration - they looked to the art of the time before Raphael, whom they characterised as the first artist to adopt the Classical ideal and to turn from the less structured art of the middle ages.

St. Martin's is an expression - one amongst many - of Victorian rejection of both its past and present. The recent past had bequeathed the Victorian world an art that WAS politically tainted. The gold and marble of baroque Versailles conjured up the obnoxious society of the *ancien regime* - the callous oppression of the poor by a brutal monarchy and a luxurious and feckless aristocracy. But the purer classicism of the Republic and Empire conjured up the opposite ogre - the closure of churches and the atheistic worship of Reason, the clamour of the mob and the overthrow of political stability. Caught between these spectres it is no-surprise that it is in England that we first find writers and architects seeking an intellectual refuge in a medieval past that never really was. In poetry and prose writers sought a 'romantic' past whose scenery was as often as not medieval. The very word 'romantic' conjures up the earliest form of imaginative literature, a twelfth-century invention - the tales of Arthur, of Charlemagne, Roland and Oliver and of Alexander and his paladins. This was a movement which already predated the building of St. Martin's by a good eighty years, and was not itself Victorian in origin.

George Frederick Bodley, the young architect who erected St. Martin's, and the artists of Morris & Co. who worked for him, were born into a culture already heavily infected with medievalism. Bodley, Rossetti and Morris were all three

brought up on the poetry and novels of Sir Walter Scott. Contemporaries, when they reflected on their obsession, were quick to trace their inspiration back to Scott, particularly his medieval novels? *Ivanhoe*, *the Abbot* and *the Talisman*. The novelist Thackeray summed it up, Scott, he said 'changed the character of novelists, then of historians ... and artists then began to fall back into the middle ages and the architecture to follow'. One suspects that Scott was even more attractive to the young Bodley, Rossetti and Morris, because their educations were otherwise so rigorously founded on the study of the classics and strict divinity. It's no wonder that it was these novels that Thackeray picked on as the source of all medievalism in Victorian art, for their power and seductiveness to the popular mind was one of the most obvious influences on any young reader.

Scott's exploitation of the seductiveness of the past, particularly the robust and manly Christian medieval past, does not quite account for St. Martin's, however. In 1819, when *Ivanhoe* was published, and sold 12,000 copies in its first few weeks, the imagery of medieval art, with which St. Martin's is decorated had already been subjected to over a century of investigative work. A more direct inspiration for the work of Bodley and Morris & Co. can be found in what was an already ancient intellectual tradition by the 19th century. Ultimately, we have to look to the Middle Ages itself for the seeds of its own intellectual self-perpetuation. A whole century before the Reformation, William Worcester, an Oxford graduate, a man of property in Bristol and East Anglia began to keep careful records of antiquities he met upon his travels. His travels were many, because he was secretary to a great landowner, and buildings, their construction and repair, were his daily business. He put this knowledge to use for his own interest, castles, churches, bridges and towns with which he came into contact were all described, and even measured, by pacing them out. Worcester was first in a very English tradition of travelling antiquarian, jotting down all sorts of disconnected information. His work was pursued by the great Tudor antiquaries, Leland, Stowe and Camden. They in turn were followed by a new generation of Stuart antiquary, the epitome of which was William Dugdale - the first historian to commission illustrations to accompany his collected observations. It is to Dugdale's illustrator, the Dutchman Hollar, that we owe our detailed knowledge of the shape of St. Pauls in London before the great fire. But one particular work of Dugdale's forged A link between the Middle Ages and the Victorians, his *Monasticon Apglicanum* - Dugdale set himself to list every former abbey, priory, and

collegiate church in England and Wales. He set himself to recover what he could of their lost charters, and describe their foundations, founders and surviving remains. He accomplished this stupendous task, despite simultaneously working as one of Charles I's heralds, during the Civil War, suffering a period of exile in Holland, and stage managing the pageantry of the later Stuart dynasty. Not surprising that he suffered a major drink problem.

Dugdale inspired numerous imitators in both England and France, where his *Monasticon* infected French antiquaries with a desire to duplicate his achievement in their own country, with no great success, unfortunately. But in France and England, Dugdale's main influence was to inspire authors to record antiquities in both words and pictures. Throughout the 18th century his imitators trod the aisles of cathedrals, abbeys and parish churches recording and drawing prospects, towers, doorways and particularly tombs. Whole series of views of castles and churches were published under the patronage of local aristocrats and gentry the sort you now find hand tinted and framed in antique shops.

In this way you could say that the Pre-Raphaelites and Revivalists never had to reinvent the Middle Ages. It never died in England, despite the triumph of the Classical style. English historians and topographers never lost sight of the medieval past. When Turner, the most admired of early 19th century artists toured England sketching antiquities in water colour he was not responding to the romanticism of the Gothick novel, or the medievalism of Scott, but following in the 18th century footsteps of the Buck brothers and Paul Sandby. Morris, Webb and Bodley grew up in an England saturated with woodcuts and steel engravings of Gothic detail. They could be met on the walls of country houses, and in the pages of the numerous county histories which now entered the houses of the educated by subscription.

Curiously, this continuing medieval heritage was intensified in England by French influence. A school of French antiquaries grew up under English inspiration. Dugdale directly influenced his French contemporaries, and his French imitators exercised a long-term influence of their own. This came out in the writings and work of the pioneering French architectural historian, Viollet-le-Duc, who published a compendium of French architecture, tracing medieval forms from the 11th to the 16th century. Viollet-le-Duc in turn directly influenced the English Catholic medievalist and architect Augustus Welby Pugin, and more importantly the influential architects, Street, Scott and

Burgess. It was in the offices and under the patronage of this older generation of medievalist that Morris, Webb and Bodley studied architectural and artistic forms. Burgess in particular was a key figure in the development of Morris & Co. and its art, as much as Rossetti, Holman Hunt and Millais. It was Burgess whose liturgical fantasies, designs of vestments, fabrics and furniture prefigured those of Morris & Co. It was Burgess who gave Burn-Jones his first commissions in Stained glass in the 1850's and whose vast knowledge of medieval liturgy and symbolism was plundered by the young artist who became Morris & Co's principal designer of glass. And it was Burgess who invited Morris & Co. to exhibit in the medieval room of the 1862 exhibition - which proved to be its commercial breakthrough.

The church of St. Martin stands at the convergence of several deep rivers of artistic inspiration. The slow stream of English and French antiquarianism connects it directly to the middle ages. But what gives the church and its art its particular vitality is the bubbling romanticism which had its source in more contemporary political and social troubles. But there was a third stream of inspiration of even more recent origin. This had its source at Oxford. It is called variously Puseyism, Tractarianism or (unsurprisingly) the Oxford Movement. I don't have time to do more than note its main features, but of those features the main one was its Catholicism. By that I don't mean that the Puseyites were Crypto-Papists, although their avowed leader, John Henry Newman, did cross to Rome with many of his followers in 1845. Puseyism was Catholic in that it embraced the view that the Church of England remained part of the Universal Church despite the Reformation, Henry VIII's Act of Supremacy and Pope Pius V's Excommunication of 1570. This argument lay in part in legalism. The first Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Crammer, had been canonically elected and approved by Rome, which in 1530 had sent him the proper symbol of his rank, the archiepiscopal pallium. Henry VIII's bishops, apart from Crammer, had also duly been ordained. For that reason Anglican bishops could claim that their orders were valid, as they preserved the line of succession of laying on of hands from the apostles. This belief in the Church of England's Catholicism chimed in nicely with the spirit of the times. It inclined High Churchmen of the Puseyite tendency to be sympathetic to the artistic, literary and architectural medievalism of their day. The historically minded among them investigated medieval liturgy and religious art. The building of Gothic style churches was not an exclusively High Church activity. Scarborough had two neo-Gothic churches built in it before St. Martin's t St. Thomas and the

lamented Christchurch) both were to house traditional or (as they were known) 'High and. Dry' congregations. What set the High Churchman apart was his need to decorate his churches in a way that contemporaries stigmatised as popish and romanist, and to use vestments that had been out of fashion since the time of Archbishop Laud in the reign of Charles I.

St. Martin's was a church built for a High church congregation and a Puseyite vicar. It was commissioned from an architect educated in the offices of George Gilbert Scott and furnished by Morris & Co., a firm deliberately set up to translate pre-Raphaelite ideals into glass, ironwork and wood. Priest, congregation, designer and furnishers all subscribed to the contemporary philosophy that medieval was best. And the end product was an essay in medieval idiom. No wonder that the local press in Scarborough in 1863, once the form of the new church became clear, was hostile. Popish chants and saints, Roman ceremonies, were all feared and predicted. St. Martin's was treated as a third column, attempting to subvert the Protestant virtue of the Anglican church in Scarborough. And every year until the 1920s, its vicar and congregation were expected to tip over the edge and secede to Rome. St. Martin's proves that symbolism, like language, can be misunderstood. The language of St. Martin's talks of ancient faith, hope and salvation, hut to the hostile party in the Church of England it spoke only of foreign fripperies, play acting and superstition.

Time now to get to grips with what precisely was the intention or intentions behind the design and furnishing of St. Martin's. We start with orientation. The word 'orientation' comes from the Latin word **oriens** which signifies the east, where the sun rises. Medieval churches, and medieval burials too, are oriented towards the east. Luckily for George Frederick Bodley, the plot granted to the parish by the South Cliff Company in 1859 allowed him to lay out his church in the medieval manner, and so exploit to the full the medieval meanings of direction. The original intention of this orientation was probably a practical one. It exposed the long southern face of medieval churches to the maximum of sunlight - very necessary when artificial illumination was candles and dips. This way the rising sun broke into the church for the morning offices through the great east window and lit up the evening offices through the corresponding west window as it set. However, 13th century writers didn't leave it at that. The east became seen as symbolic of the incarnation of Christ, as where the sun rose, and from where, according to Revelation the angel would announce the day of judgement. The south was the province of light, and light was

representative of the revelation of Christ. The south side of the church was all about life and hope. Paradoxically, in medieval churchyards it is here that the dead congregated. Burial on the south side of medieval churches was customary in the Scarborough area until the early 19th century. The dead were safer on that side, rather than on the cold northern side of church where who knows what lurked in the shadow. In some areas of the country, burial on the north was reserved for executed criminals, the stillborn foetus and the suicide.

There are no burials at St. Martin's, but there are plenty of allusions to the significance of medieval orientation. At Chartres cathedral, a favourite haunt of 19th century artists and scholars, including Morris, Rossetti, Bodley and Ruskin, the Old Testament figures are to be found in the statuary of the north porch, while New Testament figures people the south porch. At Rouen in the great abbey of St. Ouen, the glass reflects the same division. Bodley had laid this down as the guiding principle for the aisle glass at St. Martin's as early as 1861, according to a report printed in *The Builder*, The rule was followed carefully as the church's windows were filled throughout the 1860s and 1870s with prophets, kings and judges along the north, from Moses to Ezekiel, and on the south apostles, martyrs and the three Marys. Why was this? If light symbolised revelation of the divine, that revelation granted the world through Christ was obviously superior to the earlier revelation of God to the Jews. Old Testament figures were therefore only to be illuminated by the imperfect light which filtered indirectly through the north side. Medieval Christian symbolism mercilessly condescended to the Jews. A favourite theme was to portray the triumph of the Church over the Synagogue, depicted as two women. The Church is crowned and triumphant, while the Synagogue is blinded by a veil or blindfold and its crown falls from its head as it stumbles, a broken banner in hand. There is no such depiction at St. Martin's, and indeed it was a medieval image scrupulously avoided by the Victorians, yet the placing of glass in St. Martin's gives the same message an imperfect revelation, a blinded people and a broken covenant.

Bodley reproduced further medieval symbolism in reproducing the standard plan of a medieval church. The basic plan of a medieval church in the west was of two rooms, the western room called the 'nave' where the people stood, chatted and sat, and a smaller eastern room called the 'chancel' where the divine mysteries were celebrated. The chancel took its name from the **cancell** or screen which divided one from the other, marking the limits beyond which the common people and their domestic animals could not pass. It also

obscured the mystery of the mass and enhanced its sanctity. The shape of their churches gave medieval symbolists wonderful material for their art. An ancient image was the church as a ship on which the faithful were carried to salvation; as the ark carried Noah and his family. It is for this reason that the western cell of the church is called the '**nave**', deriving from the Latin **navis** a ship. But the structural symbolism adopted by Bodley was more recent and Roman. In this, the nave represented the world in which we live, the chancel and sanctuary beyond, the world to come. This made the connecting arch between them a symbolic focus of the church. The connecting arch' became the gateway of death between the two worlds; the screen across it a symbol of the veil that concealed. Other symbolism naturally followed and began to be put in place in the course of the thirteenth century. A great cross was painted or placed in or above the chancel screen. This particular sort of cross is now known as the '**rood**', the Old English Word for a cross or Sacred object. The significance of the rood was to act as an overpowering symbol of Christ's triumph over death on the Cross, which allowed the fallen race of man to pass between this world and Heaven.

At St. Martin's this great symbol is duplicated. The church as built in 1862/3 had no screen - perhaps dispensing with this Romish symbol in order to deflect Low Church criticism, which was already loud enough. High Church Anglicanism liked the screen because of its symbolic separation of laymen from clerics, for Puseyite clergymen set a lot of store by the high position into which their orders admitted them. In that respect their inflated sense of their own calling had much in common with the assertive priesthood of the 12th century church. But although St. Martin's had no screen, Bodley himself climbed the scaffolding in 1862 and painted a great rood on to the wall above the arch. That gesture was almost his own passage into eternity. A flaring gas jet set his whiskers alight as he was painting and nearly sent him tumbling on to the floor below. It might have comforted him if he had fallen that he was dying an artistic martyr for Catholicism in a highly symbolic way. Fortunately he kept his balance.

The medievalism of St. Martin's was enhanced in 1894 by the installation of screen and rood to Bodley's design. The new screen was fitted up in best late medieval style, with the cross bearing an image of the crucified Christ and being flanked by figures of Mary and John, the two figures the gospels place (or seem to place) nearest to the crucified Christ. Mary (as is usual) stands to the right of the Cross, the place of honour in medieval and later belief. One of

the three texts honouring Christ painted on the chancel side of the screen reminds us of this, ***Tu ad dexteram dei sedes***: 'thou that sitteth at the right hand of God' from the Latin Gloria. The Golden Legend expresses the importance of Mary, rather than anyone else, at the Crucifixion. Mary was the second Eve; the true type of womanhood. When all others lost their faith at the Crucifixion she alone was constant. Therefore she represented at that point the whole church, and held the place of honour there in iconography, and holds it still at St. Martin's.

The screen and rood recreate the central symbolism of the Church plan. Unfortunately, at St. Martins, it conflicts rather with the scheme of the glass. Beyond the rood is yet another Crucifixion in the panels of the east window above the altar, which would have held iconographic point of honour until the erection of the rood, which effectively blocks it out. The scheme of the glass in east and west walls alludes to a different symbolic idea. In 1861, according to the report in the Builder which is our only evidence for Bodley's thinking behind St. Martin's (apart from St. Martin's itself), the idea was to have a last Judgement in the west rose window. This was in line with the symbolic meaning behind orientation. The west was where the sun set, and it represented death and finality. Judgements were commonly to be found either here, or painted above chancel arches which, as we have seen, also symbolise an aspect of death. A number of cartoons by Rossetti for the Judgement which was never executed still survive. But at some time in 1862 the scheme was changed. A new message was devised to make more of the lancets showing Adam and Eve executed by Ford Maddox Brown for the west wall below the rose window. The new theme was Christ as the second Adam bringing redemption through sacrifice. The Crucifixion to be placed in the E. Window was augmented by the narrative glass panels surrounding it which portray the parable of the Vineyard, in which Christ figures as the King's son murdered by his treacherous servants. The final scheme is founded on the medieval idea of Christ as the new Adam sent to redeem the world from the sin of the original. The west rose window under the new scheme contained an Annunciation by Burne-Jones. This features the Virgin Mary as the physical means of redemption. As God drew the original Eve from the side of Adam so the second Adam was drawn by God from the second Eve. ***Ave Maria*** were the words by which the angel greeted the Virgin. Medieval commentators made much of the similarity between ***Ave*** (meaning 'greetings') and ***Eva***, (Latin form of Eve). In this way Bodley and Morris neatly repackaged several medieval ideas into

something quite original. West and East windows complement and answer each other, or at least they did, until the rood cross and screen introduced a discordant echo.

More expected in the church is the way angels are used. For obvious reasons, one looks upwards to find angels and archangels in a medieval church, and because they were beyond the reach of the pikes, stones and arquebuses of the iconoclasts, it is still possible to find them. They fly around Beverley Minster in great flocks, settling on canopies and capitals, bosses and tracery. At St. Martin's they occupy the upper windows in the clerestory, and are to be found making music on the painted panels of Webb's canopy of honour directly above the altar. They also sound various instruments in the roundels of the western rose window. Angels are thickest where sanctity is greatest. Thus musical angels and adoring angels surround the Adoration of the Magi by Burne-Jones above the altar. The greater orders of angels are present here also, and here alone, except for a St. Michael in the north aisle with the militant prophets, Gideon and Joshua. Almost all the angels in the church are by Burne-Jones and he betrays some acquaintance with the medieval theory of the nine orders of angels, but only to a degree. He has picked up the medieval habit of dressing up angels in the vestments of the Church, they being ministers of God. But the use of stoles, dalmatics and copes was usually allotted to the order of angels of the second hierarchy, called Virtues. Virtues were supposed to be those angels who performed the miracle of the mass, the turning of bread and wine to Christ's body and blood hence, they dressed for the mass. But Virtues, being a superior order, had six wings not two, as Burne-Jones has them. It is unclear also in his treatment of the higher angels in the East wall tracery, which of the high orders he is portraying: Cherubim, Seraphim, Powers, or Dominions? He is only really sound on archangels. Gabriel, Raphael, Michael and Uriel all get their required symbols of sceptres, spears, scrolls and books in the portrayals flanking the Adoration.

From the medieval vocabulary of orientation and location used at St. Martin's, we move to other messages, particularly a rather favourite medieval theme: power and social distinction. One of the great symbolic inventions of the 12th century was that of heraldry. Heraldry is the system by which medieval noblemen advertised their presence by banners, shields and robes bearing their distinctive family symbols and colours. The first inklings of heraldry are found in north east France around 1100; by 1200 it was a fully developed system. Heraldry was restricted to the greatest men in society. It was not even

permitted to knights till around 1230. To possess a heraldic device was as much as to say you were of noble descent and pure blood. So when craftsmen wished to stress the nobility and greatness of Christ, they occasionally turned to the heraldic shield. They didn't retrospectively award Christ a heraldic device, although the medieval imagination was perfectly capable of inventing devices for saints who lived 1000 years before the invention of heraldry: for example the red cross on white of St. George. Christ was too obviously beyond such a worldly concern. Shields did however carry symbols associated with Christ: most commonly the symbols of the Passion - nails, crown of thorns, sponge, ladder, etc. Otherwise they carry the **IHS** monogram of Christ, representing the Latin **Iehsus**. Often they were borne up by angels, almost as the squires of Christ. Bodley's craftsmen at St. Martin's executed several examples of the monograms on shields: on the chancel screen, the Lady Chapel screen, the foot of the rood and on the wings of the reredos behind the altar.

The monograms on shields behind the altar feature another symbol associated with distinction - they are crowned. The crown was not a symbol associated with royalty in Christian symbolism. In fact kings were only exclusively associated with open crowns after the 11th century. The older symbolism was to represent the reward of the soul in heaven - an adaption of the Classical crowns and diadems awarded to Greek and Roman sports champions and war heroes. The sporting allegory for the Christian life was an old one - an ancient name to describe monks was as 'athletes of Christ', souls in strict training for Paradise. The crown above Christ's monogram represents his triumph over death through sacrifice. But there are other forms of diadem in the church of St. Martin's associated more with authority. The occasional angel, particularly those of Bodley on the reredos, wear what are called 'garlands', thin diadems fashioned out of flowers, sometimes surmounted by a cross in the front. In one case - a clerestory angel on the S. side - the garland is made up of roses in the style made fashionable by Lord Leighton in Victorian painting. There was a point to these garlands. They first appear in medieval literature and iconography in the 12th century. Generally they were made of metal roses - the flower symbolising majesty - and were placed on the heads of princes and dukes. Kings wore them too, but only when they took off their heavier full crowns. They represent power and dominion of the second rank. Therefore medieval artists found them suitable for the greater angels who ministered to the King of Kings.

One has to ask at this point to what degree Bodley and Morris & Co. actually understood the symbolism they were using. As we have seen, Burne-Jones's angels show an unfamiliarity with the more obscure heights of symbolic literature had he read and digested the Golden Legend he could not have portrayed such confusion. His angels were a composite of bits and pieces of medieval glass and painting he had seen in his apprenticeship and travels, particularly in Italy. Besides, the artists of Morris & Co. were not by any means copyists, they were too original for that. Thus Burne-Jones's angel in the Dorothy and Theophilus Window is a unique creation. It has red wings made of a double thickness of glass and flames dance on its brow, a traditional symbol of the presence of the Holy Spirit. But this said, there has to have been some unconscious translation of symbolic detail, reproduced without thought, such as the use of shields and monograms by Bodley's craftsmen.

But on other subjects, Bodley, Morris and their associates were fanatical in their use of medieval detail. This is nowhere clearer than in their portrayal of saints and prophets. The Middle Ages, by means of the popular 'Lives' of saints, and particularly by the compendium of the Golden Legend developed a comprehensive code of what are called 'attributes' to identify portraits of saints. So Peter had his keys, Paul the sword of his martyrdom; the Virgin Mary her lily; to name only the most famous. Strictly speaking, these are signs, not symbols, but the marvellous detail and accuracy with which Morris & Co. equipped its saints betrays exhaustive study. The window of the Three Marys in the south aisle is a very careful evocation of what is quite an obscure medieval cult - that of the third Mary. The Virgin and Mary Magdalene are present with their usual attributes, the Virgin with lily and devotional book, Mary Magdalene with her jar of precious ointment clasped in gold. But then there is the third Mary who represents the confusion over whether it was or was not Mary Magdalene who was the 'other Mary' who took spices to the tomb. The third Mary, sometimes called Mary of Bethany, was an insurance in case Gregory the Great (who initially settled in favour of there being two Marys) had got it wrong. She carries a rose. This is a very obscure symbol, but may be an allusion to the description of the Virgin Mary as '**a rose without thorns**'; short of a symbolic attribute, Burne-Jones borrowed a second hand one of the Virgin Mary. Burne-Jones also makes a very learned pictorial reference to the iconography of Moses in his window for the north aisle. Moses is shown with what appears to be horns coming out of his forehead. This is an image which occurs as early as the fourteenth century. The reason is

a simple misreading of the Latin bible. When he came down from Mount Sinai after coming face to face with the glory of God he carried the tablets of the Commandments, but, says the Vulgate "***ignorabat quod cornuta esset facies sua ex consortis sermonis domini***". If you translate that properly you get "*he knew not that the skin of his face glowed because of his close converse with God*", but **cornuta**, meaning 'shone' or 'glowed' can also mean 'horned', in which case the translation reads "*he knew not that his face had grown horns because of his close converse with God*" and the next verse reads, '*When Aaron and the sons of Israel saw that Moses' face had horns they feared to approach him*', and who could blame them. The end result was that the less sophisticated readers of the Vulgate portrayed Moses with horns, but this solecism was retrieved by the more learned, like Burne-Jones, who fashioned the alleged horns out of rays of light.

The Pre-Raphaelite artists of St. Martin's were a cultured and learned set of men and women whose attainments are nowadays difficult to appreciate fully. Their education was limited as we would look at it, but two things they knew, and knew well. They knew their Bible and they knew Latin. Classics and Divinity were the only two subjects taught in the schools of their youth. If you add to this their study in the churches and museums of France and northern Italy, then their command of medieval symbolism and form is no longer surprising. As we have seen the spirit of their Age pushed them that way in any case.

To take my final illustration of this, I want to look at an iconography, moment early in the artistic conception of St. Martin's, probably in 1881 after Bodley received the commission. There are only a few hints surviving about the discussions between Bodley and Morris at this time, but they were intense, and as we have seen, they produced the coherent scheme of glass given to the Builder to publish that year.

There is a symbol adopted in the early iconography of St. Martin's which says much about the knowledge and also the originality of its builders and furbishers. On the east wall of the nave, although badly faded, can still be seen Bodley's original wall painting of 1862. Apart from the painted rood, he also decorated the wall with a vine trellis, and in the spaces between are featured two devices: the monogram of Christ and a pomegranate. The pomegranate, apart from being sweet and sticky, is a fruit with a complex symbolic history. It was the attribute of the goddess Hera, queen of Olympus. In her case it betokened fertility (because of its many seeds) and also marriage, because it

was the token by which Hades, god of the Underworld, bound Persephone his wife to him. It symbolised spring, of which Persephone was the patron goddess and therefore rebirth. This latter sense is one of its Christian meanings too. But its principal medieval meaning - according to Vincent of Beauvais - was as a symbol of the Church itself. The pod of the pomegranate contains many seeds, as the Universal church contained all Christian people.

The appearance of the pomegranate in Bodley's mural decorations of 1862 is not unique in the early iconography of St. Martin's. Philip Webb also painted pomegranates all around the sanctuary walls the same year. The church's early fabrics also include pomegranates; more notably the Red Frontal. This was a Morris & Co. product commissioned directly for the church, probably in 1862, and certainly by 1864. Small red Pomegranate flowers also decorate the tracery of the east wall, interspersed with narcissuses, a symbol of the triumph of God's love over sin and death, and olive, a symbol of God's assurance of peace.

Why the prominence of this rather obscure fruit? We have to remember what St. Martin's was an isolated outpost of Catholic Anglicanism in the North East of England, one of the few Puseyite, High churches in the diocese of York. It was built in the teeth of opposition from the locality and from the archbishop too. Bodley and Morris, both High Churchmen, were aware of this. The pomegranate, symbolising the place of their brand of Anglicanism in the Universal Church, was a stubborn avowal of the mission of the new church of St. Martin. It was an intelligent and instructed symbolic declaration of a modern manifesto by an ancient Catholic symbol. In a way, it was a symbol of its age too (although here the symbolism is wholly mine). Look at it, and at St. Martin's, as Victorianism incarnate! an allegory of restless energy and reform, so alarming even to the Victorians, that they had to excuse it to themselves as no more than a revival of the distant and romantic past.