

“THY WORD IS ALL, IF WE COULD SPELL”

“THY WORD IS ALL, IF WE COULD SPELL”:
ROMANTICISM, TRACTARIAN AESTHETICS AND E.B. PUSEY’S
SERMONS ON SOLEMN SUBJECTS

By
CHRISTOPHER SNOOK, B.A. (Hons)

A Thesis
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree
Master of Arts

McMaster University

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MASTER OF ARTS (2001)
(English)

McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE : "Thy Word is all, if we could spell": Romanticism, Tractarian
Aesthetics and E.B. Pusey's *Sermons on Solemn Subjects*

AUTHOR: Christopher A. Snook, B.A. Hons (Dalhousie University)

SUPERVISOR: Dr. Grace Kehler

NUMBER OF PAGES: 109

ABSTRACT

The influence of Romanticism on nineteenth-century aesthetics has been well documented. Less well researched, however, has been the significant contribution of the Romantic Movement to the religious discourse of the Victorian church. Focusing on the movement commonly called the Oxford, or Tractarian, Movement, I examine the religious significance of the Romantic discourse inspired by the works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth. Specifically, I outline the importance of the Romantic sensibility for nineteenth-century preaching, focusing on the works of E.B. Pusey. Pusey has often been neglected in studies concerning the aesthetic aspects of the Catholic Revival in the Church of England, and though his sermons and theology demonstrate a notable Romantic influence, critics have favoured those members of the Movement who produced explicitly aesthetic works (such as John Keble and his book of verse, *The Christian Year*). In contrast, this Thesis locates Pusey in relation to nineteenth-century aesthetic concerns.

The sermon occupied a place of central importance in the religious and literary discourses of nineteenth-century England. Attendance at sermons was both a religious obligation and a cultural activity. The pulpit functioned as a source of moral pedagogy and social commentary, and the century's famous pulpiteers were the objects of considerable public attention. As a leader of the Oxford Movement, Pusey was at the forefront of one of the most significant cultural events of the nineteenth century, and it is in his sermons that the aesthetic and theological vision of that Movement can best be located. To that end, this Thesis elucidates the characteristics of nineteenth-century pulpit oratory and the

indebtedness of the Victorian sermon to the aesthetic theories of the Romantics. Pusey's sermons, particularly the *Sermons on Solemn Subjects* delivered at St. Saviour's, Leeds, are considered in relation to these issues.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks are due to Dr. Grace Kehler, whose enthusiastic supervision of this Thesis, and whose patience and wisdom, have been indispensable. I thank my second and third readers as well, Dr. John Ferns and Dr. Alan Bishop, respectively. Their attentive consideration of this project has been extremely helpful. And I thank those Professors with whom I studied this past year: Dr. Ronald Granofsky, Dr. Imre Szeman and Dr. Peter Walmsley. Their comments and suggestions concerning my work have been a great help in writing this Thesis.

I must also thank my family, particularly my parents. Their support this year and in years past has made this Thesis possible. As well, I thank all of my friends who have aided me in innumerable ways, especially Alan and Erica, for opening their home to me this past year. And I thank Barb for her continuous support and encouragement.

A great debt is owed to the parish of St. George's Anglican Church, Halifax, and especially to Father G.W.A. Thorne, Rector, and Mr. Richard Gallagher, lay member. It was there that I first encountered the powerful vision of catholicity inspired by the Tractarians, and there that its urgency for the life of the Church in the twenty-first century was first impressed upon me.

Finally, I dedicate this Thesis to my father, Allan Snook, who first taught me the Faith in both word and deed.

Deo Gratias.

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CHAPTER ONE
ROMANTICISM AND THE OXFORD MOVEMENT:
TOWARDS A TRACTARIAN AESTHETIC

INTRODUCTION

In his late nineteenth-century novel *Jude the Obscure*, Thomas Hardy refers to Christminster (his fictionalized Oxford) as “that ecclesiastical romance written in stone” (31). Within the economy of the novel, this comment reflects on more than the architectural riches of the University. By emphasizing the university’s medieval architecture, Hardy recalls the tide of gothic church building and restoration undertaken in England from the middle of the nineteenth century until its end.¹ Hardy’s emphasis on the *ecclesiastical* dimension of Oxford’s architecture also gestures towards the revival of liturgical “medievalism” in Church of England Ritualist parishes which embraced pre-reformation and contemporary Roman Catholic ceremonial in the celebration of Holy Communion and the Divine Office. Seen thus, Hardy’s comments point to the deeply romantic impulse that infused the Church of England’s Catholic Revival (centred in Oxford), and its subsequent architectural and liturgical movements. The Revival was a reaction against the aridity of eighteenth-century rationalist discourse, a movement that explored “the subjective and the place of imagination and deep feeling in relation to both faith and reason” (Rowell 6).

In this thesis, I will discuss such resonances between romance (and by extension Romanticism) and the movement in the Church of England commonly

¹ Much of this work was performed by the Cambridge Camden Society which sought to refurbish churches in accordance with fourteenth-century gothic architecture. The young Tractarian J.M. Neale for a time directed the group’s work.

called the Oxford, or Tractarian, Movement.² To link Romanticism and a theological movement is, perhaps, to conflate supposedly distinct discourses – the literary and the theological. But, as much criticism of the period has shown and, indeed, as the Fathers of the Movement themselves demonstrate, the Oxford Movement was from its inception deeply indebted to British Romanticism and distinguished by the literary accomplishments of its members. Indeed, two of the Movement’s three leaders wrote and published poetry thematically indebted to the Romanticism of Coleridge and Wordsworth. For example, John Keble’s phenomenally successful book of devotional poems, *The Christian Year*, re-articulates Wordsworthian conceptions of nature in relation to the feasts and fasts of the Church year.³ Through such works, the Movement developed a distinctive aesthetic vision that wedded aesthetic concerns with doctrinal principles.

If it is possible to discern a peculiarly Tractarian aesthetic, there has been a critical tendency to limit discussions of it to a relatively normative set of figures. Of the Oxford Fathers, Keble and John Henry Newman have received the most critical attention. For poetry, critics favour Keble, whose *Praelectiones Academicæ* constitute perhaps the most definitive statement of Tractarian aesthetic principles. The less well-known Tractarian poet Isaac Williams is also given critical attention for his extremely significant elaboration of the principle of

² Generally speaking, the Oxford Movement dates from the year 1833 to 1845, beginning with John Keble’s sermon “On National Apostasy” and ending with John Henry Newman’s secession to Rome. The Tractarian period, properly speaking, only extends as far as 1841, at which point the *Tracts for the Times*, which were one of the main means of communicating the Movement’s vision, were stopped at the request of the Bishop of London after the publication of Newman’s infamous Tract 90. After 1845, though one may still speak of the Oxford Movement, there was a new generation of clergy and laity who extended the Movement beyond the initial vision of the Oxford Fathers (Keble, Newman and Pusey), and thus new appellatives arose, such as the Ritualist Movement.

³ It is worth noting that this book was for many years a central vehicle for disseminating the Movement’s distinctive theological vision.

Reserve – one of the three central concepts of Tractarian aesthetic theory. However, Newman is the only Tractarian to have received consistent critical attention not only for his theological thought, but for his sermons as well (though his poetry has been neglected). However, as Robert Ellison notes in *The Victorian Pulpit: Spoken and Written Sermons in the Nineteenth-Century*, Newman's sermons are often eclipsed by critical attention to his theological texts. Hence Ellison's claim that there is a paucity of sustained critical commentary on nineteenth-century preaching (12). This has left the writings of E. B. Pusey largely neglected, despite the fact that he is arguably the most significant of the Oxford leaders, both in terms of his extensive influence on the Movement and for the quality and significance of his publications.

In this thesis I will attempt to redress the absence of critical commentary on Pusey and his role in the formation and articulation of the Oxford Movement's aesthetic vision, including its debts to Romanticism. Specifically, I will look at Pusey's sermons and their relation to characteristic elements of Tractarian aesthetics, in particular, the principles of Reserve, Typology and Analogy. I will argue that these principles find their precursors in the work of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth and their attempts to articulate an epistemology that redresses the eighteenth-century's division of subject and object, mind and nature. As well, I will suggest that the most significant aspect of the Tractarian aesthetic vision is its translation into theological and pedagogical, or pastoral, principles. Hence, it is in the sermon – that literature in which aesthetic form meets doctrinal principle and pedagogical intent – that we can best locate the clearest expression of the Movement's vision.

Through an examination of Pusey's sermons, I will also substantiate the claim that whatever its philosophical, dogmatic or literary aspects, the Oxford Movement was primarily a movement of *devotion*. Its aesthetic and theological concerns were consistently interpreted in relation to devotional practice so that, for example, Coleridge's epistemology is translated into a means of experiencing God in nature. As Owen Chadwick writes, the Oxford Movement was,

more a Movement of the heart than of the head ... It was not concerned for religious experience, while being unconcerned about religious language – on the contrary, it was earnestly dogmatic. But the Movement, though dogmatic, was not dogmatic simply because it possessed or shared a particular theory of dogma. It always saw dogma in relation to worship, to the numinous, to the movement of the heart, to the conscience and the moral need, to the immediate experience of the hidden hand of God – so that without this attention to worship or the moral need, dogma could not be apprehended rightly. The Creed was creed – the truth ... But it roused the mind to prayer, and only through prayer and life was it known to be truth (1)

Of central importance to this thesis will be the status of language in Tractarian aesthetics. I maintain that language is a contested site for the Tractarians and that, particularly in Pusey's sermons, it is characterized by a series of tensions that exist in a dialectical relation to one another. Both Coleridge and Wordsworth valorize language's ability to communicate the divine, representing poetic and religious discourse as sources of fulfilment and inexhaustible signification. But both are also beset by anxieties about the "waywardness" of language – its ability to be employed improperly and its susceptibility to misinterpretation. Their attempts to negotiate the tension between language's "plenitude" and its "lack" are rearticulated in Pusey's sermons, and the relationship between fulfilment and lack is the central dialectic

in his *Sermons on Solemn Subjects*. This tension is perhaps the result of Coleridge's, Wordsworth's and the Tractarians' use of an incarnational model for their linguistic theories. They contend that language "incarnates" divine mysteries following the pattern of Christ's incarnation, which revealed the hiddenness of God. This is a moment of fulfilment. But the incarnation also involved the violent death of Christ, and this is mirrored in language's susceptibility to misuse and misunderstanding. However, Christ's death must be read within the economy of the Resurrection, and I will argue that the dialectic of lack and fulfilment in Pusey's sermons can be properly understood only upon this horizon.

I will proceed in three chapters. In the first I will outline the particular ways in which the Movement is indebted to Coleridge and Wordsworth. With respect to Coleridge, I will argue that the Movement gained a language in which to articulate the relationship of the individual to the Church, as well as a way of "thinking" the natural world sacramentally through his conception of the symbol. In an extension of this discussion, I will argue that the Movement derives from Wordsworth a way of reading nature as a visible and prophetic sign of God's creative will. Though it is difficult to isolate particular moments of influence between the Tractarians and these two poets, one can easily demonstrate that Coleridge and Wordsworth contributed to a culture in which the Tractarians could develop their theological and aesthetic vision.

The second chapter will attempt to expound a theory of pulpit oratory by considering the nineteenth-century sermon as a species of "oral literature" as developed chiefly by the twentieth-century critic Robert Ellison. I will consider his comments in relation to discussions of pulpit oratory both prior to and during

the nineteenth century, including critical work that has been done on other prominent Anglican preachers (for example, John Donne and Newman), in order to develop a critical method with which to read Pusey's sermons. Central to this endeavor will be a consideration of the tensions in the Tractarian use of Coleridge's linguistic theory. Though Coleridge celebrated Romanticism's liberation of feeling and sentiment, I will argue that this liberation was also a source of considerable anxiety. Coleridge and the Tractarians felt a need to temper the Romantic valorization of subjectivity and emotion with assurances of dogmatic truth. Attendant on this discussion will be a consideration of the status of sermons and sermon publishing in nineteenth-century England.⁴

The final chapter will involve a reading of Pusey's *Sermons on Solemn Subjects*, in which I will revisit the aesthetic claims of Tractarianism discussed in the first chapter, and the homiletic theory of the second chapter, in considering Pusey's sermons as, on the one hand, examples of the Tractarian literary ethos, and, on the other hand, as expressions of the doctrinal and pastoral aspects of that ethos.

I. THE INFLUENCE OF COLERIDGE

The influence of Samuel Taylor Coleridge on nineteenth-century aesthetics, philosophy and theology is pervasive. As the primary popularizer of German Idealism in England, and as a key explicator of a symbolic theory of knowledge, he instigated a reformation of eighteenth-century rationalism through both his prose writings and poetry. The Oxford Movement was no less influenced by his

⁴ Its interesting to note that the sermons under consideration, Pusey's *Sermons on Solemn Subjects*, were preached at the end of October, 1845, and published before the end of the year, attesting to the literate public's significant demand for and consumption of sermons.

thought than any other area of nineteenth-century culture. Indeed, as G.B. Tennyson points out, “Coleridgean ideas permeate Tractarian thinking on aesthetic subjects and, except on the question of nature, probably color Tractarian poetics more than those of any other single figure” (*Victorian* 17). As I have argued above, however, aesthetic principles and theological doctrine are not distinct spheres for the Tractarians, and so Tennyson’s claim must be extended to include Coleridge not simply as an aesthetic influence, but also as a theological one. Moreover, as I will demonstrate, his influence on the Oxford Movement was in many respects primarily theological and philosophical.

It is interesting to note, however, that the Tractarians often limited their acknowledgement of the Movement’s indebtedness to Coleridge. John Henry Newman’s reserved comments in his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* are a typical Tractarian assessment of Coleridge’s importance to the Movement. Their hesitancy most likely stems from the highly speculative character of Coleridge’s later thought on Biblical exegesis (which was much influenced by his study in Germany with the proponents of Higher Criticism and his reading of Idealists like Friedrich Schiller) and which the Tractarians would have viewed with suspicion as bordering on heterodoxy if not explicitly heretical.⁵ Newman writes:

Then I spoke of Coleridge, thus: ‘While history in prose and verse was thus made the instrument of Church feelings and opinions, a philosophical basis for the same was laid in England by a very original thinker, who, *while he indulged in a liberty of speculation, which no Christian can tolerate, and advocated conclusions which were often heathen rather than Christian*, yet after all instilled a higher philosophy into inquiring minds, than they had hitherto been accustomed to accept. In this way he made trial of his age, and succeeded in interesting its genius in the cause of Catholic truth.’ (94; my emphasis)

⁵ For an example of the quality of this thought see Coleridge’s *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*, pages 1-102.

Tilottama Rajan provides another possible explanation for the Tractarian's hesitant acknowledgment of Coleridge. According to Rajan, characteristic nineteenth-century perceptions of Coleridge *vis-à-vis* Wordsworth were based upon a set of distinctions. Rajan lists the distinctions between the two as such: Wordsworth represented for the Victorian reader the imagination, the country, an affinity with nature, the ability to overcome dejection, and both propriety and Englishness; Coleridge, on the other hand, represented metaphysics, the city (inherently deviant), self-consciousness, a greater affinity with the Continent than with Englishness, a spirit of dejection, and a general spirit of impropriety (125). No doubt the Tractarians' extremely vocal commendation of Wordsworth's poetry (witness Keble's dedication of his lectures on poetry to him) stemmed from their general valorization of country over city and nature over artifice. And perhaps more explicitly than any other Tractarian, Keble's misgivings about the city reflect Rajan's claims. Keble saw "the townsman as the arrogant, irreligious democrat who measures all things by the standard of his own enjoyment", as opposed to the countryman, who "lived close to Nature and [was] satisfied with the things that were familiar and common to all men, such as ... the changes of the seasons and the frailty of human life" (Beek 76, 77).

However, despite the Movement's ambiguous relationship to Coleridge, and despite its hesitancy concerning the Continental aspects of his thought, it – and Pusey in particular – was deeply affected by his work. In conjunction with the other primary influences on the Tractarians (the seventeenth-century Anglican Divines, Bishop Butler's *Analogy of Religion*, written in the eighteenth century, and Patristic scholarship), I contend that Coleridge offered the Movement both a

language and a theory of knowledge in which to articulate its increasingly sacramental vision of the world, and one which corresponded closely with its notion of God's "reserved" manifestation of Himself in nature, the Sacraments, and the Church. Interestingly, given the Tractarians' opinion of German Higher Criticism, Pusey himself studied in Germany in 1825 and again in 1826.⁶ He attended Johann Eichorn's lectures as had Coleridge thirty years before, and was deeply influenced by the thought of Friedrich Schleiermacher (Rowell 73). He saw in Schleiermacher less the German rationalist "who indulged in a freedom of speculation for which he was chiefly known in England, thanks to Connop Thirwall's translation of his minor treatise, *St Luke*" than "the great regenerator of the pietist impulse in German Lutheranism":

Schleiermacher had located the grounds of religious assent in the feelings rather than the reason, or rather in the 'feeling' (*Empfindung*), religious reason, which he distinguished from 'feelings' (*Gefühl*), religious sentiment or emotion, as well as from the critical faculty. The distinction became important to Pusey as to others, for it provided an answer both to religious rationalism and 'enthusiasm' by locating religious conviction neither in the formal reason nor in the affective sentiments but in a distinct faculty which partook of elements of both and which Coleridge, following his German masters, called the 'Understanding'. (Frappell 9-10)

Frappell, it should be noted, seems to mistakenly identify this "distinct faculty" with Coleridge's "Understanding". Rather, for Coleridge the faculty that mediates between reason and feeling, or mind and sentiment, is the Imagination (which I will discuss shortly).

Pusey would later distance himself from the work he wrote concerning the state of German theology, *An Historical Enquiry into the Probable Causes of the*

⁶ See Henry Parry Liddon's *Life of E.B. Pusey*, vol. 1: 70-114, for a detailed account of his time in Germany.

Rationalist Character Lately Predominant in the Theology of Germany, in which he offered a sympathetic reading of the development of German theology. In it he did not attempt to defend the rationalism rampant in German critical thought, but rather to defend the simultaneous pietistic resurgence that he found in a figure like Schleiermacher. He retained throughout his life the conviction he gained from Schleiermacher that religious experience could never be a purely intellectual response to the Divine, but that it proceeded in large part from the sentiments, especially a feeling of dependence upon God (Rowell 73). For Pusey, faith has a “compound character”:

In Divine things, awe, wonder, the absorbing sense of infinity, of purity, or of holiness, infuse conviction more directly than reasoning; nay reasoning in that it appeals to one faculty only, and that for a time is erected into a judge, and so, as it were, sits superior, constantly goes directly counter to the frame of mind wherein belief is received. (cited in Rowell 11-12)

Here Pusey writes against the possibility of “deliberating” one’s way to God. And clearly in this he saw Coleridge as an ally. Pusey noted in 1827 that “Coleridge, in his *Aids to Reflection*, had ... given ‘seasonable advice to those, who think that in the reception of Christianity the intellect alone is concerned’” (Forrester 222-23). Moreover, like Coleridge, he defended (though with distinct reservations about the application of philosophy to theology) Immanuel Kant for

indicating the inadequacy of speculative reason to pronounce on matters outside the scope of the intellect alone, ‘[leading] many who were not bound by the fetters of the new philosophy, to listen to the voice of nature, the revelation of God within them, and to seek as the direct result of consciousness, the truths which speculation was unable scientifically to justify.’ (Forrester 223-24)

It is in relation to those truths that are “the direct result of consciousness” that I wish to consider more closely Pusey’s, and the Oxford Movement’s, indebtedness to Coleridge. What I want to suggest, following Martin Roberts’s essay “Coleridge as a Background to the Oxford Movement”, is that Coleridge provides a theory of knowledge that accounts for the formation of self-consciousness as dependent upon the *prior* existence of a Supreme Being. The most fundamental truth that arises from consciousness, then, is knowledge of God. This is an important development in Coleridge’s thought because it

makes significant departures from the man-centred subjective individualism of many romantic and idealist thinkers. It is perhaps this new perspective which can be regarded as one of the background influences on the Oxford Movement ... as far as the supernatural is seen to be indispensable to the achievement of the ‘good’ life, or growth in holiness.⁷ (Roberts 40)

As I discuss the way in which Coleridge formulates this view of consciousness, I will also suggest how it informs his idea of the Imagination and the symbol, paying attention as well to his conception of the Church.

“One of the aims of the Romantics,” writes Albert S. Gérard,

was to find a substitute for the outdated and, to them, unsatisfactory philosophy that sees the world as a mechanism and God as the great watchmaker, and so emphasizes the dualism of matter and spirit. They were deeply aware of the unity of the cosmos ... As a result, they were trying to express this intensely felt unity, either through poetic images or in philosophical statements. (43)

⁷ It is worth noting that the “good” life was a topic of contention during the nineteenth century. From Benthamites to J.S. Mill, and even to T.H. Huxley, the characteristics of, and the motivations for, virtuous living were a source of debate.

Coleridge, no less than other Romantics, was attempting to articulate his experience of unity in the world as he formulated his theory of consciousness. It bears the marks of his other theorizations – of the relationship of the Imagination to the material world, of nature’s relationship to the supernatural, and even of the visible Church’s relationship to the invisible Church – in that it attempts to resolve binary oppositions of, for example, subject and object, into a more dialectical and dynamic vision. Coleridge outlines his struggles with the idea of a Supreme Being in his *Biographia Literaria*:

I retired to a cottage in Somersetshire at the foot of the Quantock, and devoted my thoughts and studies to the foundations of religion and morals. Here I found myself all afloat ... The idea of the Supreme Being appeared to me to be as necessarily implied in all particular modes of being, as the idea of infinite space in all geometrical figures by which space is limited. I was pleased with the Cartesian opinion that the idea of God is distinguished from all other ideas by involving its reality; but I was not wholly satisfied. (111)

As Martin Roberts points out, what Coleridge here claims about the Divine is by no means speculative (36). The Divine Being he envisions is “implied in all particular modes of being” and functions as the presupposition of his own self-consciousness, constituting and informing his subjectivity. Coleridge

cannot *be* the Coleridge he is, apart from his dependence upon the Supreme Being; for it is only by beginning to ascend to the latter ... that Coleridge can start to make some sense of his own life ... The point is, it is not only the coherence of consciousness which is at stake with his concern for the supernatural, but more fundamentally, the ability to *form* consciousness at all. Coleridge seems to be feeling his way towards a ‘centre’, around which he can form himself and thereby establish his own coherence. For Coleridge, the supernatural is crucial not merely for arriving at a religious faith, but more importantly, for the formation of consciousness in its most essential and basic requirements. (Roberts 36)

What Roberts succeeds in deducing from Coleridge's *Biographia* is the dialectical relationship Coleridge envisions between the Divine Mind and his. According to Coleridge, consciousness is ordered through the admission of the priority of the Divine Mind. Coleridge's articulation of this relationship is striking because it locates the proof of God's priority *internally*. God does not manifest himself as an object of thought outside the mind, but rather as a constitutive aspect of consciousness.

Though Roberts reads the passage cited above from Coleridge's *Biographia* adeptly, he excises from his citation of it Coleridge's expression of *dissatisfaction* with the Cartesian response to his skepticism – "I was not wholly satisfied". Nonetheless, the rhetoric with which Roberts excavates Coleridge's thought suggests the means by which Coleridge overcomes his nagging uncertainties. Roberts is right that Coleridge is "feeling" his way towards the Divine. He, like Pusey, rejects the possibility that reason can deduce the reality (or the unreality) of God, and instead locates the evidence for such a claim firstly in the constitution of his own consciousness, as has been shown, and secondly in both the sentiments and nature. According to Coleridge

Nature excites and recalls [belief] as by a perpetual revelation. Our feelings almost necessitate it; and the law of conscience peremptorily commands it. The arguments that at all apply to it are in its favour; and there is nothing against it but its own sublimity. It could not be intellectually more evident without becoming morally less effective; without counteracting its own end by sacrificing the life of faith to the cold mechanism of a worthless because compulsory assent. (*Biographia* 113)

So for Coleridge, then, belief in God not only logically follows from the very nature of our consciousness, but also demands an activity of the will, facilitated

by the evidence of the feelings and nature which attest to God's presence.⁸ The resonance between his and Pusey's formulation of faith is striking: both reassert the importance of feeling in the development of religious faith, and both find in nature imprints of the Divine. As well, Pusey particularly stressed the role of the will in his articulation of the Christian life (against the Evangelical emphasis on "faith alone"), just as Coleridge stressed the need for assent. Pusey "felt able to use strong language, indeed the strongest language, about the responsibility of the human will for its choice between good and evil" (Chadwick 39-40).

But consciousness is not only ordered by the Divine. It is also able to identify signs and symbols of the Divine in the material world, and does so through the faculty of the Imagination. The Imagination, writes Coleridge, is

that reconciling and mediatory power, which incorporating the Reason in Images of the Sense, and organizing (as it were) the flux of the Senses by the permanence and self-circling energies of the Reason, gives birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves, and consubstantial with the truths, of which they are the *conductors*. (*Consitution* 228-29).

Imagination is the faculty of mediation by which Reason, the faculty capable of apprehending the noumenal, is made consubstantial with the Image, or the Real (i.e. Nature). And this is what Coleridge means when he says that human creativity is the repetition of the Divine I AM in the human soul – as Christ's Incarnation reconciled the Ideal and the Real (or the Divine and the material) so too we recapitulate the Incarnation in our imaginative perception of the world, which sees in the material the lineaments of its Divine maker (*Biographia* 167).

⁸ One suspects that both Coleridge and Pusey would locate unbelief in an unruly will and/or intellect. An intellect given to excessive speculation would contravene Pusey's and Coleridge's continual assertions that one believes *by* believing. They make faith, in part, the result of active habituation. A disordered will would be unable to act on the abundant sensory and intellectual evidence of God's existence.

As Ronald Wendling writes, “Reason’s apprehension of the noumenal is constantly *reenfleshed* in images of sense and understanding, while perceived phenomena are themselves restored through awareness of the noumenal reality saturating them” (153; my emphasis). What must be emphasized is that the Imagination does not simply “create” the image of the Divine it traces in nature. Though the perceiving mind is a necessary aspect of noting the Divine, what it traces inheres in the object it identifies. Hence Wendling emphasizes the way in which sensible material is *restored to itself* when perceived by the Imagination, insofar as the created or material is itself a trace of the Divine. Proper perception “divines” the invisible noumenal.

The Imagination, as Coleridge says, perceives the world symbolically, and it is his conception of the symbol, perhaps, that has most deeply influenced the Oxford Movement. The common contemporary tendency, especially in the wake of Paul de Man’s influential essay “The Intentional Structure of the Romantic Image”, is to conflate the symbolic with the allegorical or the emblematic, which may denote other objects but which never claims to participate in those realities. But according to Coleridge, the symbol is characterized “above all by the translucence of the Eternal through and in the Temporal. It *always partakes* of the Reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part of that Unity, of which it is the representative” (*Constitution* 230; my emphasis). As Thomas McFarland points out, de Man does a disservice to Romantic conceptions of the symbol by claiming it as a literary convention or rhetorical figure and ignoring its primarily religious signification, thus reading it as a failed allegory – precisely what Romantics such as Coleridge are arguing

against (43).⁹ Instead, for Coleridge and the Tractarians, the symbol is “the coincidence of sensible appearance and supra-sensible meaning”, archetypally so in the Church’s Sacraments, in the constitution of the Church itself and in nature (Gadamer 69). Perhaps the clearest of Coleridge’s explanations of the symbol comes in his defence of the Anglican doctrine of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist:

There is, believe me, a wide difference between symbolical and allegorical. If I say that the flesh and blood (*corpus noumenon*) of the Incarnate Word are power and life, I say likewise that the mysterious power and life are verily and actually the flesh and blood of Christ. They are the allegorizers who ... moralize these hard sayings, these high words of mystery, into a hyperbolic metaphor. ... (cited in McFarland 42)

It is a symbolic conception of the world that most deeply marks the Tractarian ethos, in which bread and wine, duly consecrated, become the Body and Blood of Christ, and in which nature can speak of the hidden mysteries of God:

Whatever else can be said about the the theological vision of the Oxford Movement, it most certainly celebrated the universe as a marriage of love. The world was a sacrament, an epiphany of God’s beauty, and comprehending that beauty was the reception of Grace ... And although sacraments are only fully manifest in the life of the Church, the *perichoresis* (coinherence) between God and Creation is not limited to the bread and wine laid upon the altar at the mass but extends to the entire universe. (Brittain 8, 19)

⁹ Moreover, de Man’s contention that Romantic Imagination represents “a possibility for consciousness to exist by and for itself, independently of all relationships with the outside world” misreads, it seems to me, the constitutive role nature plays in the formation of consciousness (16). The “Symbols” of nature convey to the mind impressions of the Divine, and it is by no means clear that the mind could know these things in and for itself without acting upon the material world. To suggest otherwise ignores the incarnational model that Coleridge employs, which presupposes an active engagement with the material world.

Much of what has been said thus far offers a highly affirmative assessment of Coleridge's theories. What has yet to be discussed are the multiple sites of tension in Coleridge's linguistic theory. These will be explored at length in the following chapters, though I wish to note briefly the characteristics of some of his concerns. In the texts considered so far, Coleridge's rhetoric often betrays an anxiety over the validity of his linguistic theory. His discussion of the symbol employs an assertive rhetoric (it "always" participates in the reality it signifies) and is often less systematic in its articulation than declarative (*Constitution* 230). As well, his discussion of the doctrine of Christ's presence in the Eucharist cited above is extremely polemical. In both of these instances his rhetoric betrays his concern over competing theories of language and knowledge, and he appears to write with a view to destabilizing these other theories. But whatever Coleridge's concerns over the ideas expounded by his contemporaries, his central concern is with the inadequacies of language itself. As previously mentioned, the susceptibility of language to misinterpretation is a spectre that haunts his theory of the symbol. How, if the symbol communicates the Eternal through the temporal, is the Eternal to be apprehended properly? How does one safeguard orthodox interpretations of Divine revelation? How can language both symbolically signify Divine truth and appear to be an inadequate means of representing the Divine? These are the concerns that manifest themselves in Coleridge's writing, and they will be examined in detail in chapters two and three. In chapter three, particularly, the tense relationship between language's adequacy and inadequacy will be discussed in relation to Pusey's *Sermons on Solemn Subjects*.

In the following section, as I turn to consider the influence of William Wordsworth on the Movement, more attention will be given to the symbol in

nature. For now, however, I wish simply to recapitulate the main influences that Coleridge exercised on the Tractarians. Firstly, he elucidated a vision of the subject as necessarily constituted in relation to and dependent upon the Divine, resonating strongly with what Pusey took from his studies in Germany. Secondly, he articulated the characteristics of a faculty that can mediate between reason and emotion, and apprehend the spiritual in the material, not unlike Schleiermacher's "religious reason". Thirdly, he popularized a concept of the symbol which corresponds with the Tractarians' sacramental view of the world, and which contributed to the formation of a language in which to express this view. In addition to these three things, Coleridge also proposed a vision of the Church deeply resonant with the Tractarian vision. In his *On the Constitution of the Church and State* he argues for the supernatural authority of the Church, which is not subject to the dictates of political authority. Coleridge writes:

As Bishops of the Church of Christ only they can possess, or exercise ... a spiritual power, which neither King can give, nor King and Parliament take away. As Christian Bishops they are spiritual pastors, by power of the spirits ruling the flocks committed to their charge (135).

Coleridge's comments are striking given that Keble's Assize Sermon of 1833, with which the Movement began, was responding to precisely such a perceived infringement of the State in ecclesiastical affairs. Much of the Oxford Movement was given to reasserting the sacred commission and authority given to deacons, priests and bishops in their ordination. That authority derives directly from God and extends to the governance of the Church, the faithful administration of Word and Sacrament, and the Absolution of penitents. Moreover, in asserting the Divine origins of the Church's authority, he also asserted its "Heavenly

composition” as a single Body, made up of many members, in whom Christ dwells entirely individually, and all of whom together dwell in one Christ. The image of the Church as Christ’s body on earth becomes an important focus for the Oxford Movement both as a means of encouraging holy living and as a site of contention as Anglicans begin to leave the Church of England for the Church of Rome, particularly following Newman’s secession.¹⁰

Having considered the substantial influence of Coleridge on the Movement, I will turn now to Wordsworth.

II. THE INFLUENCE OF WORDSWORTH

The Oxford Movement’s indebtedness to Wordsworth is two-fold. On the one hand, he was a contemporary proponent of the vision of nature that the Tractarians were rediscovering in the writings of the Church Fathers, and which had come to them through Bishop Butler’s seminal eighteenth-century text, *The Analogy of Religion*. On the other hand, I want to suggest, he expounded an *incarnational* theory of language that saw the process of linguistic (primarily poetic) expression as akin to, and also a participation in, the Divine mystery of Christ’s incarnation. He located in language the lineaments of the Divine as the Tractarians had in nature. For Wordsworth the translation of thought to word mirrors the process by which the Logos (Christ as the Word of God) is made flesh. Indeed, it is the incarnation that furnishes both Wordsworth and the

¹⁰ Debates arose concerning the sense in which the Church Catholic – the true Body of Christ – requires *visible* union. The Tractarians developed a “branch” theory of the Church, locating catholicity in those parts of the Church that had the essentials of the Catholic faith: the Creeds; Bishops, Priest and Deacons in the Apostolic Succession; and (an extension of this) valid Sacraments. They included the Church of England, the Church of Rome and the Eastern Orthodox Church in their model. Many who seceded felt that this position was untenable. Visible unity, they argued, was only evident in the Roman Catholic communion and entailed submission to the Bishop of Rome.

Tractarians with the central dogmatic principle around which to organize their theories of language and nature.

It is the first chapter of St. John's Gospel that points the way for Wordsworth's and the Tractarians' (not to mention centuries of Christian writers and theologians) suggestions about the nature of language.¹¹ For Wordsworth, "the incarnational theory of language" is an attempt to find a theory of poetry that "remained rooted in experience yet refused to accept the compromise of a system of meaning to be paid for by renunciation of access to anything beyond the limits of our categories of understanding" (Haney 13). Perhaps as well it is an attempt to locate in thought and speech an activity corresponding with

his own idea of nature as a volume containing, in addition to phrases reminiscent of the Bible and suggestive of grace, and in conjunction with columns and paragraphs on the greatness of God, lengthy passages and entire chapters given over to the inculcation of moral emblems and the intimation of types of things to come. (Brantley 141)

What Brantley claims is that the world itself, created in and through the Word, appears to Wordsworth *as* word: as a textual site constituted by a *material* language. This appropriately expresses the Tractarians' conception of the visible world as a natural testament to God's spiritual reality where all is, to quote Pusey, "one great picture *language*", aspects of the "one great *alphabet* of that condescending language in which God reveals himself to man" (*Presence* 30-31; my emphasis).

The most explicit parallels between Tractarian thought and Wordsworth are found in the work of John Keble, for whom Wordsworth was both poet and prophet of the Divine. What Keble

¹¹ See St. John 1. 1-18.

welcomed more than anything else in Wordsworth's poetry was his new approach to the real charms of nature, his way of giving a moral and mystical interpretation to concrete objects and everyday situations, which, he thought, agreed so strikingly with the views on life and Nature of the early Fathers. (Beek 82)

Keble's own poetry in *The Christian Year*, though taking as its subject matter the structure of the liturgical calendar, bears marked thematic resemblance to Wordsworth's nature poetry, discerning in nature references to the Divine. For the Tractarians, for whom human creativity mirrors Divine creativity, the production of nature poetry is "doubly religious: religious in the first instance because the very impulse to create is religious; religious again because nature poetry treats as its subject that which already bears the imprint of God and which reveals God by Analogy" (Tennyson, *Victorian* 67). Indeed, it is Wordsworth who in part informs the very principles of Tractarian aesthetics previously mentioned, particularly Analogy. As he writes in "Tintern Abbey":

... and I have felt
 A presence that disturbs me with the joy
 Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
 Of something far more deeply interfused

 A motion and a spirit, that impels
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought.
 (Wordsworth l. 96-99, 103-04)

In this we can read a prelude to the Tractarian's conceptualization of Analogy, in which nature images the Divine. But it is the poem's *own* ability to gesture towards the Divine that caused the Tractarians to valorize the usefulness of poetry for instilling moral and religious sentiments. As Keble writes, "the very practice and cultivation of Poetry will be found to possess, in some sort, the power of

guiding and composing the mind to worship and prayer” (*Lectures 2*: 482-83).

Poetry, then, is a precursor to religious practice, and may even be seen as catechetical. Keble felt that the

poetical interpretation of natural phenomenon in which all things are invested with higher associations might help smooth the way for the acceptance of the *moral interpretation* of nature, in which all visible things are regarded as means intended for the ‘healing’ of the soul. In its turn, the moral interpretation might lead to the acceptance of the *mystical* or *prophetical interpretation*, in which all visible objects are regarded as ‘shadows of the good and true things to come’. (Beek 96)

In his description of poetic language Keble constructs a dialectic of sorts between religious and poetic truth:

And in this regard it is marvellous how Piety and Poetry are able to help each other. For, while Religion seeks out, as I said, on all sides, not merely language but also anything which may perform the office of language and help to express the emotions of the soul; what aid can be imagined more grateful and more timely than the presence of poetry, which leads men to the secret sources of Nature, and supplies a rich wealth of similes whereby a pious mind may supply and remedy, in some sort, its powerlessness of speech ... Conversely ... it is Religion [by which] ... men come to realize that the various images and similes of things, and all other poetic charms, are not merely the play of a keen and clever mind, nor to be put down as empty fancies: but rather they guide us by gentle hints and no uncertain signs, to the very utterances of Nature, or we may more truly say, of the Author of Nature ... In short, Poetry lends Religion her wealth of symbols and similes: Religion restores these again to Poetry, clothed with so splendid a radiance that they appear to be no longer merely symbols, but to partake (I might almost say) of the nature of sacraments. (*Lectures 2*: 481)

What’s striking about Keble’s description of poetic language is that it is not only figured as a representational discourse. Rather, he lends to it a certain “materiality” implied by his equation of poetic symbols and sacraments. In the

Catechism of the *Book of Common Prayer*, a Sacrament is described as “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace”, and in the twenty-fifth Article of Religion, Sacraments are “not only badges or tokens of Christian men’s profession, but rather certain sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace” (*BCP* 550, 707-08). But the “materiality” of poetic language (the sense in which Keble figures language as the “material” vehicle of grace like the bread and wine in Holy Communion) does not exhaust the attributes Keble ascribes to it. He also proposes that language is an event, leading us to the “very utterances of ... the Author of Nature.” Poetic language *itself* has “effectivity” in the world and is not simply a composite of signifiers approximating with more or less success a signified object. Keble’s language is a “sign” of God’s utterances. But like Coleridge’s symbol that always participates in the reality it communicates, it is not a sign that gestures *away* from itself towards an absent signified, but rather one that gestures *into* itself as an agent of revelation. This formulation of a theory of poetic discourse is essentially incarnational and is, I contend (following David Haney’s argument in *William Wordsworth and the Hermeneutics of Incarnation*), in large part indebted to Wordsworth’s incarnational poetics.

Wordsworth writes:

If words be not ... an incarnation of the thought but only a clothing for it, then surely will they prove an ill gift ... Language, if it do not uphold, and feed, and leave in quiet, like the power of gravitation or the air we breathe, is a counter-spirit, unremittingly and noiselessly at work to derange, to subvert, to lay waste, to vitiate, and to dissolve. (*Prose 2*: 84-85)

Central to this vision of language is a peculiar conceptualization of words as efficacious objects. Wordsworth’s theorization is not unlike Coleridge’s, for

whom words are “living educts of the Imagination”, nor unlike Newman’s who, speaking of Holy Scripture, writes:

Every word of Revelation has a deep meaning. It is the outward form of a heavenly truth, and in this sense a mystery or Sacrament. We may read it, confess it; but there is something in it which we cannot fathom, which we only, more or less, as the case may be, not perfectly enter into. Accordingly when a candidate for Baptism repeats the Articles of the Creed, he is confessing something incomprehensible in its depth, and indefinite in its extent. (*Via Media* 1: 254)

Coleridge’s and Newman’s statements helpfully elucidate Wordsworth’s. Coleridge’s words are “educts”, which is to say passageways or translators, of the Imagination’s perceptions. To use Wordsworth’s terminology, they are an incarnation of thought. They mediate between the Imaginative faculty and the articulation of its activities in the world. But clarity is not the necessary corollary of this articulation. Rather, as Newman demonstrates, words offer the possibility of *participating* in a mystery (“heavenly truth”) which language “materializes” (is even a gate through which to enter), but does not exhaust. For Wordsworth, Newman and the Tractarians, the words of faith (i.e. Scripture, the Creeds, Conciliar definitions, sacred poetry and sermons) are,

together with the symbols and sacraments of the Church, the ‘keys and spells’ ... which enable us to enter and dwell in a Christian universe. In their origin they are both to be conceived as the stammering attempts of human language to acknowledge God’s presence and activity, and as the chosen economy by which God condescends to our finitude. (Rowell 64)

Like Coleridge, however, there is an anxiety present in Wordsworth’s conception of language. As well as being an incarnation of thought, language can be an “ill gift” or a “counterspirit” which, Wordsworth suggests, is what it

becomes when functioning purely as a representational discourse – as “clothing”. Far from being a consistently realized aspect of language, the symbolic character of language is subject to dissolution and decay, misuse and misappropriation. Wordsworth’s anxiety over words that fail to signify “properly” can in part be explained by the dual function Bishop Geoffrey Rowell attributes to language (cited above). Rowell characterizes language as both humanity’s “stammering” to God and as God’s “condescension” to people. It is both revelatory of God and a sign of our incapacity; it is both, to borrow from Wordsworth, clothing *and* incarnation. This tension in the nature of language will be explored in the second chapter in relation to nineteenth-century homiletics.

What I am suggesting is that Wordsworth’s incarnational poetics figures language as a symbolic structure (in the Coleridgean sense). Furthermore, I want to suggest that the Tractarians adopt this conception of language inasmuch as it offers a way to articulate the efficacy of religious language for revealing Divine truth. Such a vision of language differs markedly from nineteenth-century philology and its fears about language’s arbitrary qualities, as well as from Saussurean and post-Saussurean linguistics that rely upon a signifier/signified distinction. The influence of Wordsworth on the Tractarians is chiefly to be found in these areas of nature and linguistics, wherein he furnished them both with a theory of language and with a contemporary account of nature that resonated with the accounts they were excavating in the works of the Church Fathers and Scripture.

III. TRACTARIAN AESTHETICS AND ROMANTICISM: AN OVERVIEW

The relationship between Tractarianism and Romanticism is one of influence and one of articulation. As G.B. Tennyson writes, “Tractarian aesthetic theory is . . . more than a simple continuation of Coleridge and Wordsworth; it is rather *Romanticism in a new key*” (*Victorian 22*; my emphasis). The question, then, is in what ways are the Tractarians indebted to Romantic figures such as Wordsworth and Coleridge for the formulation of their aesthetic principles, and how do they re-articulate that Romantic vision in relation to their theological concerns? What I wish to accomplish in the following pages is to briefly outline the lineaments of the Romantic impulse in Tractarian aesthetics as well as the general characteristics of that aesthetic. Central to this chapter will be the consistent attempt to locate Pusey in relation to the aesthetic developments of the nineteenth century.

In considering the influence of an ostensibly aesthetic movement such as Romanticism on a theological movement like Tractarianism, it is best to begin by considering how figures such as Pusey, Keble and Newman negotiate the difference between art and theology. Indeed, their ability to reconcile these two apparently distinct discourses, following Coleridge, is integral to their visions of God and of nature. As Stephen Prickett notes, the influence of Coleridge and Wordsworth on nineteenth-century culture cannot be limited to either aesthetics or theology. Rather, their influence was “in [Coleridge’s and Wordsworth’s] sense of the word, ‘poetic’ . . . an indivisible union of the two” (Prickett, *Romanticism* 6). As Coleridge notes in his *Biographia Literaria*, the act of poetic creation (the aesthetic) mirrors the Divine act of creation (the theological) in that it is a “repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM”

(167). Thus, Coleridge figures aesthetic activity as a participation in the Divine activity: not only does he dissolve any apparent distinction between theology and aesthetics, but he also renders aesthetics contingent upon God's prior actions and model.¹²

Similarly, one of the most striking features of Tractarian discourse is its alignment of poetry and the spiritual life, even using poetry as a trope through which to describe the life of the Christian. As Newman writes:

revealed religion should be especially poetical – and it is so in fact. While its discourses have an originality in them to engage the intellect, they have a beauty to satisfy the moral nature ... It brings us into a new world – a world of overpowering interest, of sublimest views, and the tenderest and purest feelings ... *With Christians, a poetical view of things is a duty* – we are bid to colour all things with hues of faith, to see a divine meaning in every event and a superhuman tendency. (“Poetry”; my emphasis)

Strikingly, Newman and Coleridge align poetic and religious *perception*. Poetry becomes a Christian faculty, or disposition, that can “read” in the finite traces of the Divine. John Keble extends this image of the poetical as an attribute of the Christian life to describe the way in which God acts in the world : “So may it not be affirmed that He condescends in like manner to have *a poetry of His own*, a set of holy and divine associations and meanings, wherewith it is His will to invest all material things?” (Tract 89, 144). Between Keble and Newman we find a notable re-articulation of Coleridge's theory of creative activity. Newman's poetic “faculty” is an image of Keble's description of Divine creativity. Following

¹² As has been discussed, this relationship between human labour and God's labour informs an epistemological vision that challenges, through the faculty of the imagination, attempts to divorce subject and object, or mind and nature.

Coleridge they are proposing a theory of “correspondances”: they locate in the subjective consciousness a faculty corresponding to a Divine attribute, the primary function of which is to perceive the Divine. Poetry becomes a means of perceiving God’s presence in the world, and in this sense the Tractarians conclude that reading poetry is “almost a devotional exercise” (Tennyson, *Victorian* 29).

The Tractarians’ valorization of poetry not only elevates the Christian poetic disposition and the poetic activity of God, however, it also elevates the poet. For Keble, in particular, the poet is a moral guide and a prophetic witness of God’s will. He became convinced that his “studies of the Old Testament, of Hebrew poetry and of the Classics . . . supplied him with sufficient evidence in support of his contention that there has seldom been a revival of religion without some ‘noble order of poets’ first leading the way” (Beek 73). And his dedication of his Oxford Lectures on Poetry (the *Praelectiones Academicæ*) to Wordsworth voices a similar view of the poet’s moral and religious function:

To William Wordsworth, True Philosopher and Inspired Poet, who by special gift and calling of Almighty God, whether he sang of man or of nature, failed not to lift up men’s hearts to the holy things, nor ever ceased to champion the cause of the poor and simple, and so in perilous times was raised up to be a chief minister, not only of sweetest poetry, but also of high and sacred truth – this tribute, slight though it be, is offered by one of the multitude who feel ever indebted for the immortal treasure of his splendid poems in testimony of respect, affection and gratitude. (*Lectures* 1: 8)

But if this is the vision that Keble had of the poet, it was coupled with a rigorous conception of what constitutes “true” poetry, and for this the Movement was indebted yet again to Coleridge and, especially, to Wordsworth. The Movement

found in both authors a conception of nature that paralleled its own, which saw that

the visible and tangible were but symbols of a transcendent life, the vesture of the spirit, through which its motions made themselves felt. They rejected absolutely the notion of a material earth, isolated and complete, working by cast-iron laws, in the mechanical deadness of unintelligent force. On the contrary, it was alive, with a life not its own, which alone gave it meaning; and this life was personal, intelligent, sympathetic, communicable to man. In and through nature, spirit spoke with spirit, man came in touch with God. (Forrester 82)

This conception of the natural world as sign and symbol of the supernatural was central to the Tractarian aesthetic (as well as to its dogmatic and pastoral theology). True poetry articulated a Divine presence in the natural world so that the inward life of the soul could be guided by the hidden life of God in His external works. As Pusey writes in an unpublished lecture,

[God] mirrors Himself in the works of His hands. He stamps in the book of His Word the meaning of the book of his works ... All is one great picture language, to present to our sense and minds what is invisible, intangible, inconceivable. (*Presence* 30-31)

Pusey “textualizes” nature and creates a parallel between the text of Holy Scripture, which functions as an interpretive key, and the text of the world. The centrality of Scripture to the interpretive process (which is to say, by extension, the centrality of Christ) is characteristic of the Tractarian world view.

The notion of God’s hiddenness in the material world constitutes the most definitive characteristic of Tractarian poetics. As has been mentioned, there are three general principles, or guiding ideas, that make up the Tractarian aesthetic – Reserve, Typology and Analogy. All of these relate to the traces of God’s

presence that the Tractarians saw impressed upon the natural world. They argued that the mysteriousness of this presence in nature corresponds with the way that God reveals Himself in sacred Scripture and in the Incarnation: in the one, He appears as a pillar of fire, or a cloud, or preaches by parable; in the other, He appears with His Divine glory veiled by human flesh. They concluded from their study of Scripture and the Church Fathers that God manifests himself to the world primarily through means of suggestion, indirection, and intimation. God's practice in the communication of His being finds expression in the Tractarian principle of Reserve, which is a re-articulation of a patristic practice commonly called the *disciplina arcani*.¹³ Reserve characterizes the way in which God reveals Himself to the world. It is also, as Tennyson suggests, a pedagogic method whereby individuals are introduced gradually to the truths of the faith. Simply put,

the idea of Reserve is that since God is ultimately incomprehensible, we can know Him only indirectly; His truth is hidden and given to us only in a manner suited to our capacities for apprehending it. Moreover, it is both unnecessary and undesirable that God and religious truth generally should be disclosed in their fullness at once to all regardless of the differing capacities of individuals to apprehend such things. God Himself in His economy has only gradually revealed such things as we know about Him. (Tennyson, *Victorian* 45)

But if Reserve characterizes “methodologically” how God relates to world, then the “material” of that methodology is Analogy. Analogy implies the way in which the visible things of the world speak of the hidden mysteries of God. This does not function, however, as a random attribution of theological

¹³ The most comprehensive explanations of this principle are Isaac Williams's Tracts 80 and 87, *On Reserve in Communicating Religious Knowledge*.

signification to various natural phenomenon. Rather, the Tractarians stress that the eternal truths attested to by nature are more than fabrications of the mind – they are inherent properties of the objects themselves. David Forrester cites Pusey’s unpublished “Lectures on Types and Prophecies”:

instances of ... nature conveying moral and religious truth will have been felt by everyone; and they will have felt also, that these religious meanings were not arbitrarily affixed by their own minds, but that they arose out of and existed in the things themselves ... A proof that this expressiveness really lies in the object and is not the work of imagination (otherwise than as imagination is employed in tracing out the mutual correspondance of images with their reality) is furnished by this, that when the religious poets (as Wordsworth or the author of *The Christian Year*) have tried out such correspondance, the mind instantly recognizes it as *true*, not as *beautiful* only, and so belonging to their minds subjectively, but as actually and really existing. (101)¹⁴

Following from this conception of Analogy is the third of the Tractarian principles: Typology. Though difficult to distinguish from Analogy in that it too attempts to discern the relationship between things of this world to the Divine, Typology and Typological readings are most often associated with the study of Scripture in which the “type” of the Old Testament (say, for example, the manna in the wilderness), is taken to pre-figure the New Testament’s anti-type (in this case, the institution of the Holy Communion, the Bread from Heaven). But the Tractarian use of Typology was by no means novel.¹⁵ It was preceded by a long Evangelical tradition of reading the types of the Old Testament as prophecies and figures of the New. Where the Tractarians differed, however, was in their return

¹⁴ Note the clear Coleridgean resonances in Pusey’s description of the faculty of the Imagination.

¹⁵ For a brief but helpful account of Typology in the nineteenth century see G.B. Tennyson’s “‘So careful of the type?’ – Victorian Biblical Typology: Its Sources and Applications.”

to the Patristic practice of Typological reading. Unlike the Evangelical practice that tended to favour discovering *individual* correspondances between the type and anti-type, the Tractarians allowed the type to figure a multiplicity of anti-types, and extended Typological readings to include not only those types that were fulfilled in Christ, but those that seemed to be figures of the Church and its ministry as well (as, for example, the “type” of the manna and the “anti-type” of the Holy Communion cited above). It is important to note, however, that the proper reading of types, and, indeed, of nature as the book of God’s works, means reading them through Christ. In this sense, as W. David Shaw points out, Tractarian Typology reverses the order of cause and effect. The anti-type indwells and interprets the type, so that we must “read backwards,” as it were, if we are to understand the world, or Scripture, as revelations of God (Shaw 190). As Clark M. Brittain writes:

The created order is filled with types we do not recognize until we learn to read them through Christ. With the advent of the Incarnation we learn the complete meaning of nature. Everything utters Christ. Accordingly, when Pusey speaks of a ‘sacramental union between the type and anti-type’ he is affirming the presence of Christ in the type and fulfilment. (9)

Brittain’s equation of perception with reading is an apt description of Pusey’s perspective. For Pusey the world is a series of words informed and sustained by the uncreated Word. Nature is an “alphabet” of divine utterances, as it were, and Christ provides the interpretive framework. But, in an intentionally circular argument, what we read *through* Christ *is* Christ. Pusey clearly articulates this in a comment that juxtaposes Typology and Analogy:

...there is a beauty in this universal relation of the most distant and minutest things and words of Holy Scripture, with the most central and greatest, even those of Him, our Lord ... It is analogous to His scheme of creation, in which the lowest things bear a certain relation to the highest, attesting the unity of their author; that it is agreeable to the connection of His Word and His word, that this should, even in what seems the most incidental and insignificant detail of it, speak of Him, who spoke it, be penetrated with Him, who is its and our life (Tract 67, 389-90)

God's utterances (his works) speak his Word.

Reserve, Analogy and Typology, then, refer to God's means of communicating His being to the world, and were archetypally represented for the Tractarians in the Sacraments, wherein materials of the world (water in Baptism; bread and wine in the Holy Communion) become the means of conducting Divine grace mystically – and actually – to the recipient. This relationship between the Sacraments and the Tractarian aesthetic will be expanded upon later.

Having summarized briefly the general characteristics of the Tractarian aesthetic, and its indebtedness to Coleridge's conceptions of imagination and symbol and Wordsworth's reading of nature, I will now turn to a closer consideration of nineteenth-century homiletics in an attempt to elucidate a methodology for reading Pusey's sermons. I will further explore the ramifications of an incarnational theory of language for sermon writing and pulpit oratory. For Wordsworth to "draw on the Christian idea of incarnation for his theory of language is for him to acknowledge that this paradigmatic translation of spirit into event entailed the violent death of the God become man" (Haney 11). In the following chapter I will consider the ramifications of the necessary "death of the word" (within, of course, the economy the Resurrection) on homiletic theory.

CHAPTER TWO NINETEENTH-CENTURY PULPIT ORATORY: OUTLINING A HOMILETIC THEORY

In this chapter I will briefly consider nineteenth-century sermons, focusing both on their cultural status and on theories of homiletics expounded during the century. After outlining the lineaments of Tractarian homiletic theory, I will consider ways of reading sermons in order to articulate a theoretical framework for the third chapter's reading of Pusey's *Sermons on Solemn Subjects*. But in order to establish clear lines of continuity between this and the preceding chapter, and with a view to the third and final chapter of this thesis, it is perhaps useful to begin with some general comments on the ideas framing this investigation of nineteenth-century pulpit oratory.

Nineteenth-century religious discourse is no less inflected by contemporary contestations over the status of language than any other discourse. Indeed, it might even be argued that religious discourse in the late-Romantic and Victorian periods is more thoroughly (and anxiously) engaged with the problems of language than any other field. The Romantic "liberation" of the subject through the emancipation of feeling (so important to Coleridge and the Tractarians) carried within it the seeds of both a rampant subjectivism and anthropocentrism (intolerable to both Coleridge and the Tractarians). Moreover, because the subjective turn in Romanticism valorized subjective religious sentiment without erasing the susceptibility of subjective experience to misinterpretation, fears arose over the legitimacy of religious experience: might it not, like other forms of knowledge, be subject "to delusion, sin, and self-interest"? (Zemka 15). A great

deal of nineteenth-century religious discourse negotiates these tensions inherited from Romanticism. These tensions evince the embattled status of language in the nineteenth century amidst increasing concerns over its ability to adequately represent the Divine and religious experience (or, for that matter, nature: witness the proliferation of competing scientific discourses throughout the century). Significantly, within the context of religious discourse there was by no means consensus about the status of religious language. Though Coleridge's linguistic theories were taken up by the Tractarians, they represent only a fraction of the ever-expanding theories of religious discourse throughout the century. These theories, of course, are intimately connected to the religious dogmas they expound, and the explosion of religious sects and quasi-religious organizations is a peculiarity of the Victorian age which left its traces on nineteenth-century language, particularly in its literary, scientific and social texts. As J. Hillis Miller notes, the "battle among various forms of belief and unbelief was fought ... within each individual text" (281). One need only note in Pusey's *Sermons on Solemn Subjects*, for example, the repeated references to Christ as the Pattern and Redeemer of humanity. This insistence stands in sharp contrast with (and as a challenge to) the rising tide of British intellectuals for whom, in the wake of German higher criticism, the life of Christ becomes exclusively a *pattern* of virtuous living, stripped of dogmatic and theological significance. George Eliot is one of the most notable members of this group, and contributed to the propagation of its views through her translations of works such as David Friedrich Strauss's *Life of Jesus*. As well, Charles Marriot's contribution to the *Sermons* explicitly censures the liberalism of those such as J.S. Mill for whom sin, he argues, is "no more than a putting things out of a certain order which is best for the *happiness* of

all” (22-23; my emphasis). These debates were in large part facilitated by the rise of literacy and the easy dissemination of printed material throughout the century, which led to an “increased visibility of religious debates” (Zemka 27).

It is not within the purview of this investigation to examine at length the conflicts that informed nineteenth-century theories of language. What is essential, however, is a brief articulation of the Tractarian position. As is to be expected, it is deeply influenced by Coleridge. As I have suggested, religious discourse in the nineteenth century is a contested site, and attempts at articulating a theory of religious language and experience are marked by a series of oppositions and contradictions that attest to the embattled state of language: interiority versus exteriority, orality versus literacy, symbol versus allegory. But within both Coleridge’s writing and Pusey’s *Sermons on Solemn Subjects*, there is a dialectic that can account for these multiple oppositions. I began to explore this dialectic in the preceding chapter when I considered Coleridge’s epistemology in the *Biographia Literaria*, in which the condition of possibility for subjective consciousness is located in the prior existence of God. This sort of dialectical opposition is characteristic of Coleridge, in which a finite category is positioned in relation to an infinite, or supernatural, category. (For example, his discussions of the Church set in dialectical relationship the divinely constituted Church [infinite] and the National Church [finite]). However, Coleridge’s proof of God’s existence is as much a source of anxiety as of comfort, and the curious corollary of Coleridge’s discovery of God and the imaginative liberty associated with it is an increased disciplining and surveillance of the self (Zemka 25-26). As Sue Zemka notes, Coleridge’s religious writing embraces both a rhetoric of freedom and one of discipline. It is

evocative at times of the sensations that connect his consciousness to timeless forces both natural and supernatural, [and] is also evocative of the power and necessity of taming his consciousness, of bending it to the will of an abstract necessity. In his later life Coleridge discovered in Christian theology a suitable narrative for the process of expanding and disciplining consciousness. The creation and the interrogation of interior spaces were projects shared by British Romantic and Protestant thinkers; Coleridge was a master in both movements because the creative discomfort he experienced in the former was allayed by the structure, logic, and purpose he found in the latter. (Zemka 26)

What I want to suggest, then, is that out of the dual impulses of Protestant theology and Romantic sensibility Coleridge devises a dialectic characterized by both a disciplining function and encounter with God, respectively. The Protestant impulse gave Coleridge a means of redressing the powerful liberatory discourse of Romanticism. Where the will is liberated, on the one hand, it is tempered and “tamed” on the other. But why should the will need to be tamed? Quite simply, because of sin.¹ For Coleridge, as for Pusey, the dialectic in which he operates is one of lack and fulfilment. Where the will is afflicted by sin (lack), it is disciplined by preaching and Scripture in an unfolding progression towards God (fulfilment). In this way, Coleridge recapitulates his fondness for dialectics between finite (lack) and infinite (fulfilment) categories. But note that God is involved dialectically every step of the way, in the awakening of a sense of sin, in the means of correction, and in momentary feelings of improvement. Zemka notes that in Coleridge’s religious writing this dialectic is never fully synthesized (32-33). Rather, the constitutive elements progress by an “unfolding deferral” in

¹ Though it should also be noted that Coleridge’s increasingly conservative politics justify the suspicion that the need for discipline also arises from his fears about the *undirected* liberatory power of Romanticism. Coleridge seeks for a means of harnessing and tempering the energy of the free will in institutional structures such as the Church and the State. Part of his desire for discipline is certainly the result of his reactionary politics.

which the soul ever more closely conforms to God (Zemka 65). Notably, this is precisely the dialectic that is constitutive of Pusey's preaching, as I will show in chapter three. His sermons also employ a "negative" dialectic of lack and fulfilment, whose constitutive elements are never synthesized. It is this dialectic that is fundamental to the ensuing discussion of nineteenth-century homiletics. The various oppositions and tensions discussed will be situated in relation to the broad categories of lack and fulfilment, especially the problem of orality and literacy for nineteenth-century homiletic theory. As will be shown, the traditionally privileged place occupied by orality in Christian discourse, particularly strong in Evangelical circles at this time, becomes untenable with the rise of literate classes and the proliferation of print culture. Rather, the literary and the oral become inextricably linked, both in terms of sermon style and, particularly in the case of Pusey, content.

I. NINETEENTH-CENTURY PULPIT ORATORY: AN OVERVIEW

In October 1853, Edward Burne-Jones commented: "I heard Pusey on Sunday, a magnificent sermon, profound and exhaustive, on Justification. He came out now and then gloriously, full of liberality. It lasted close to two hours" (cited in Cruse 109). Burne-Jones's rhetoric is surprising. His thoroughgoing aesthetic appreciation of the sermon (it was "magnificent"), the fact that the sermon's subject matter is significant enough to warrant mention (as if the topic lends the sermon-hearing experience added significance), and his "critic's eye" for the details of Pusey's oratorical skill, all seem rather out of place when we remember that he is recounting a moment in a Sunday morning at Church. Moreover, it is difficult to know how to read his final comments. Are they simply

a reflection on the length of the sermon, or is there a hint of ecstasy in Burne-Jones's comment that it "lasted close to two hours"?

If I am guilty of deducing too much from this short comment on a mid-nineteenth-century sermon, my reading nonetheless provides a starting point for considering the status of the sermon in nineteenth-century British culture. With their curiously mixed tone of adulation and critical perspective, Burne-Jones's comments emphasize the position of the nineteenth-century sermon as an object of considerable public attention and evaluation. Not only was the pulpit the locus of pastoral pedagogy, but throughout the century it was an arena for the promulgation of widely differing world views, and for political, theological and social commentary. Attendance at sermons was not only a religious obligation; the sermons themselves had the character of a spectacle, leading Horton Davies and Lewis Drummond to describe the Victorians as "a nation of "sermon tasters," people for whom church attendance was an intellectual and aesthetic delight as well as a religious duty" (Ellison 43).² Indeed, cults of personality grew up around the famous preachers of the day such that attendance at their sermons not only drew crowds from the immediate area, but from the whole country as well. The famous pulpiteers' sermons were "regarded as essential components of any tourists or businessman's itinerary" (Ellison 55). Amy Cruse recounts the story of Lady Frances Balfour's father who was "denominationally indiscriminant" in his attendance at services, his intent being to hear and consider the sermons of England's greatest preachers. Lady Balfour commented that her

² This perhaps explains why Burne-Jones mentions the topic of Pusey's sermon. Justification was a central area of contestation between Tractarian and Evangelical Anglicans and attendance at a sermon on this topic, delivered by the leader of the Tractarians no less, lends a certain amount of cultural capital to the experience.

father's love of sermons almost constituted a "pastime" (cited in Cruse 108). Sermon-hearing, then, was not only a duty, but a pleasure, an aesthetic event and, at times, a leisure activity.

If Cruse is correct when, in her 1935 text *The Victorians and their Books*, she writes that the Victorian age was "the age of the preacher", then the paucity of recent critical commentary on nineteenth-century homiletics is striking given the large amounts of energy devoted to sermon production and consumption (108). Not only was attendance at sermons popular in the nineteenth century, but the publication and consumption of sermons in print was a thriving business.³ Indeed, it was estimated at the end of the century that "English Anglicans alone were publishing over a million sermons each year" (Ellison 46). This in turn spawned an inordinate number of books, pamphlets and articles on homiletic theory (theories of composition and delivery), as well as regular reviews of printed and orally delivered sermons. The curious status of the sermon in the nineteenth century as a participant in both oral and print culture has significant ramifications. One of these is that the sermon became increasingly subject to the dictates of literary composition. If the principles of Ciceronian rhetoric had to varying degrees governed the art of pulpit oratory in England from the time of the reformation (as well as prior to it), then by the nineteenth century, as Robert Ellison points out, sermons were being constructed "with the techniques governing the written, rather than the spoken, word" (18). But the "literary turn" in nineteenth-century homiletics was by no means an abandonment of oral tradition. Rather, it was a conflation of the two. Where the Victorians rejected the elevated

³ Cruse notes, interestingly, a connection between sermon reading and the rise of the novel. The latter, she argues, replaces the former as the most popular form of literature as the century progresses (119). Work has yet to be done on the reasons behind the cultural shift away from sermon to novel reading.

forms of Ciceronian rhetoric associated with verbosity and ornamentation, they emphasized that aspect of traditional rhetoric that focused on *persuasion*. The sermon was meant to convict and to compel. The purpose of preaching for the Victorians was “not to bring the congregation to assent to a theological theory or set of propositions, but rather to persuade – indeed, to compel – men and women to embark upon a spiritual course of action” (Ellison 19). The conflation of oral and literary cultures in the sermon marks it as a form of what Ellison calls “oral literature” – those forms of discourse that exist between the “poles” of orality and literacy (14-15). The sermon, for example, is either written with the intent of oral delivery (and therefore often stylistically unique in its use of grammatical structures associated with speech), or is delivered extemporaneously with a view to its later publication (and therefore with attentiveness to literary form). In either case, the printed sermon appears as a sort of “extemporaneous writing”, a mixture of oral and literary styles (Ellison 39). By the close of the nineteenth century,

[s]ermons were no longer regarded primarily as orations, but rather as ‘written pieces’; consequently, they were expected to ‘follow the rules of all other writings’. Rather than eliminating the practices of orality from Victorian homiletics, however, these reforms, instead, led to a conflation of the oral and written traditions, as preachers were expected to employ literary means – a simple, conversational rhetorical style – to accomplish an orality-based end – persuading the members of a congregation to embark upon a specific, spiritually beneficial course of action. This conflation is one of the most prominent elements of the theory of Victorian preaching. It is also ... the theoretical concern that first identifies the sermon as an important contribution to the “oral literature” of the British Isles. (Ellison 31-2)

But if Ellison is correct that literary and oral qualities become enmeshed in the development of the sermon during the nineteenth century, he nonetheless oversimplifies the role of the literary in sermon writing. The proliferation of

competing theories of language mentioned above, and any brief survey of Victorian literature, attest to the period's widely divergent "literary styles", few of which are "simple" and "conversational". As Elizabeth Jay notes, even among like-minded individuals such as the Tractarians, the imprecision of stylistic generalizations becomes apparent (18). The "comparative modernity" of Newman's prose is widely divergent from the "impersonal formality and reverence of a religious register aimed at by Pusey's archaizing style" (Jay 18).

If it is difficult to distinguish between the "literary" and "oral" qualities of any particular sermon, Ellison's appellation of "oral literature" for nineteenth-century homilies is nonetheless useful. Perhaps the largest lacuna in Ellison's discussion of Victorian pulpit oratory is his ellision of the *cultural* significance of oral and literary forms of communication. As Sue Zemka makes clear in *Victorian Testaments: The Bible, Christology, and Literary Authority in Early-Nineteenth Century British Culture*, Victorian religious discourse privileged orality (14-15). It associated speech, particularly in Evangelical circles, with divine "presence"; and, as religious and millenarian sects proliferated throughout the century, there was a rise in incidents of glossolalia (speaking in tongues) that again highlighted the valorization of speech. There was a sense that the spoken word could communicate God with minimal mediation, even be directly inspired by God. As Coleridge maintained, the Preacher is the "sensible voice of the Holy Spirit" (Drummond 68). Even accounts of John Henry Newman's preaching emphasize the significance of speech, or the voice. In his discussion of Newman's preaching, Ellison notes that it was Newman's *voice* that "overcame the distance a manuscript imposes between preacher and audience and touch[ed] the souls of those who heard him preach" (90). John Campbell Shairp wrote a

poem about Newman in 1873 that appeared in *Macmillan's* magazine in which he lamented the silencing of Newman's oratory in St. Mary's, the church of which he was Rector, after his secession to Rome. According to Shairp, Newman's voice was "as from the unseen world oracular", a voice that could "win" or "repel" men, and that was "piercing yet tender" and that, most importantly, elevated people "higher than they were" (376). But it is Charles Kingsley's assessment of Newman that is perhaps the most striking account of his oratorical power and of the significance attributed to the voice. Kingsley wrote for *Fraser's Magazine* in 1859:

twenty years ago when there were giants on the earth, among the Tractarians as among others, stood in that pulpit a great genius and a great orator, who knew how to use his voice. Perfectly still he stood, disdaining the slightest show of passion, trusting to eye and voice alone – to the eye, which looked through and through every soul with the fascination of a serpent; to the voice most sweet and yet most dreadful, which was monotonous indeed; but monotonous with full intent and meaning, carrying home to the heart, with its delicate and deliberate articulation, every syllable of words which one would have too gladly escaped; words which laid bare the inmost fibres of the heart, and showed to each his basest and his weakest spot, and with their passionless and yet not untended cynicism, made the cheeks of strong men flame, whom all the thunders of a Spurgeon would only have roused to manly scorn. (13)

Similar comments were made of Pusey, who similarly avoided oratorical pomp: "when it came to practical exhortation – to the searching of the heart's secrets, and the enforcement of repentance – [his voice] was like the voice of a god" (G.W.E. Russell cited in Rowell 72). To invoke the dialectic that introduces this chapter, the emphasis on orality as fulfilment (or presence) was always subtended by an anxiety over the validity of oral discourse's content, and this demanded alternative forms of verification. For Coleridge, this form of verification is

Scripture. The significance of this is its intermingling of orality and literacy: attendant on every oral discourse is a *literary* validation. Oratory vivifies the lessons of Scripture, but any claims for the priority of the oral are undermined by “the fact that what is spoken is also a substitute for what is written” (Zemka 35). For Coleridge, as Zemka notes, the *written* word of Scripture proceeds out of the *mouth* of the preacher, so “the mediums of voice and text are, in their religious experiences, inextricably interwoven” (40). This tension between the word spoken and the word written was implicit in the rhetoric of nineteenth-century English Protestantism, which both emphasized the significance of God’s “call”, heard in the soul, and the confirmation of every call through the examination of Scripture. Orality and literacy, then, stand in a complex relationship to one another throughout the nineteenth century. And significantly they partake of that dialectic between lack and fulfilment, or absence and presence, previously discussed. If orality is a site of presence, giving life to the written text of Scripture, then textuality is a necessary absence that both informs and determines the content of oral discourse.

J.M. Neale was one of the first of a series of Anglican priests to extend the devotional and theological implications of the Tractarian ideal to liturgical renewal and the revival of Religious life in the Church of England. In 1856 he published an anthology of medieval sermons. Neale’s introduction to it provides a very useful starting point for considering the characteristics of Tractarian, or Anglo-catholic, preaching. It reads less as a commentary on medieval preaching than as a diagnosis of and perscription for nineteenth-century sermonizing. Whether one favoured preaching extemporaneously or from a manuscript, a

subject of debate throughout the nineteenth century, Neale confirms the general consensus that one must preach “from the heart and to the heart”, which is to say, persuasively (xv). Neale gives content to what persuasive preaching might look like when he outlines characteristics of the great medieval preachers. Their simplicity of expression, as well as their use of familiar illustrations, anecdotes and stories, give to the medieval preachers (and their nineteenth-century counterparts) the tools of persuasiveness. But Neale identifies a number of specific ways by which the preacher can most ably affect his congregation. The first is “earnestness”, followed by a series of three properties belonging to the great sermonizers of the middle ages: a thorough knowledge of Scripture; the ability to adapt to the requirements of a congregation; and an emphasis on the contemporary significance of the Church’s history as expressed in the feasts and fasts of the Church year (Neale xxix).

“Earnestness” is an ambiguous category at best, and it might appear initially to be difficult to engage with critically. However, Neale’s emphasis on earnestness is by no means novel in the nineteenth century. If it is difficult to locate “earnestness” in a text, the emphasis on its importance for Victorian homiletics is nonetheless culturally significant – and telling. Neale’s emphasis on earnestness is symptomatic of the Tractarian concern with religious feeling, and is also related to the Oxford Movement’s overarching concern with personal sanctity. Like Keble’s poetry that is to be the product of a heart overflowing with religious feeling, Neale’s sermon is the product of the abundance of the preacher’s heart, both because of the disciplined habits of the preacher’s spiritual life and his openness to the experience of profound emotions. Sanctity is

composed of discipline and vulnerability. As he writes, comparing two styles of preaching,

The one priest speaks because it is Sunday morning, because the congregation are waiting for him, and because the publication of his sermons may possibly add to his fame or to his convenience. The other, because his heart is full of his subject, – because in Advent-time he can manifestly think of nothing but the Advent, and therefore out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. (xxix)

Interestingly, many *responses* to the great preachers of the nineteenth century echo Neale's observation. Faithful earnestness (a congregation's sense of the preacher's honesty and religious integrity) was central to a sermon's success, and could even compensate for a lack of oratorical skill – as some claimed it did for Pusey (Cruse 109; Rowell 71-72). As an anonymous author wrote in *The Congregationalist* in 1878, "How many of the greatest preachers are great not by virtue of great sermons, but by reason of great souls" (cited in Ellison 90). Newman also argued that the earnestness and sanctity of the preacher were constitutive of good preaching. For Newman, the bearing of the preacher confirmed the authority and authenticity of the words spoken. He even asserts that Truth "has been upheld in the world . . . not by books, not by argument, nor by temporal power" but by "*the personal influence*, direct and indirect, of those who are commissioned to teach it" (*Belief* 65, 77; Newman's emphasis).⁴ But earnestness is not, for Newman or for Neale, a rhetorical strategy. Rather, it is the

natural fruit of the genuine Christian life. It is present in preachers 'according to the measure of their faith and love,' and it is as central to

⁴ Note that Newman's privileging of the immediacy and efficacy of the oral is, as in the discussion of voice and orality above, accomplished in relation to and in a sense as an extension of, a textual source.

effective preaching as the content of the discourse itself. As Newman puts it, the preacher ‘persuades by what he is, as well as by what he delivers.’ (Ellison 86)

Again, however, Ellison ellides the cultural significance of the occurrence he is describing, as well as the tension between a *preacher’s* sense of his earnestness and the *congregation’s* perception thereof. Jay Fliegelman has traced the history of this emphasis on earnestness in public discourse to a shift that took place in the eighteenth century. Public oratory was “reconceptualized in the mid-eighteenth century as an occasion for the public revelation of a private self. Such a private self would then be judged by private rather than public virtues: temperance, self-control, honesty, and, most problematically, sincerity” (Fliegelman 24). The public revelation of a private self is evident throughout Pusey’s *Sermons on Solemn Subjects*. References to the spiritual struggles of the anonymous sponsor (in fact himself) who provided the funds for the building of the church in which the sermons were preached abound. Moreover, Pusey exercises throughout the sermons a rhetoric of private sin and of personal virtue. Witness his discussion of St. Mary Magdalene in the first sermon of the series, in which he speaks in detail of both her sin and conversion (*Sermons* 4). The sermons have a confessional quality, particularly Pusey’s discussion of the anonymous donor. His rhetoric at those times strains to avoid saying too much, to temper the acknowledgements of sin and avoid recounting details: “Ye know, my brethren, that this day’s offering differs from most beside, that it is the offering of a penitent. Ye know not from what sin recovered...” (*Sermons* 1). Moreover, one might argue that the inscription Pusey put in the church (the only condition the anonymous donor placed on the building of St. Saviour’s) is a radically public revelation of a private self (if not of his virtue than of his humility): “Ye who

enter this holy place, pray for the sinner who built it.” Pusey constructed St. Saviour’s as an offering to atone for his sins, both actual and perceived. Throughout his life he had a deep-seated sense of sin and felt that many of his trials, including the deaths of his wife and daughter, were the result of his transgressions.

The tension evident in Neale’s discussion of earnestness and in Ellison’s between a preacher’s private sense of earnestness and a congregation’s perception thereof is difficult to resolve. It is significant, however, that Newman’s and Neale’s comments on sincerity have a precedent in St. Augustine’s *De doctrina christiana*, the most important text in Christian homiletic theory alongside Cicero’s work. Augustine elevates wisdom over eloquence in order of importance for Christian preaching, and revises Cicero’s theory of oratory to privilege on the one hand the centrality of Scripture to the homiletic enterprise, and on the other hand, the necessity of a heart prepared by prayer and charity for successful sermons. John D. Schaeffer writes in his article on orality and literacy in the *De doctrina* that wisdom

manifests itself as the sincerity, perspicacity, and doctrinal orthodoxy of the speaker whose words come directly from the heart in which the Holy Spirit dwells... The audience recognizes that the sermon’s fusion of content and style springs not from the conscious application of secondary rhetoric to a subject but from the interior of a speaker who is making these associations and that the speaker’s interior has been formed by prayer and reading Scripture. (Schaeffer 1137-38)

Here, then, we can note a few loosely defined characteristics of Tractarian preaching. The preaching emphasizes simplicity of style, practical religious counsel, and the sanctity of the preacher. But it also has, or should ideally

possess, the three most important qualities that Neale finds in medieval sermons. The first two are of less immediate interest than the third. They are, firstly, “an immense, almost intuitive knowledge of Scripture” (as seen above in reference to St. Augustine), and secondly, “their power of adapting themselves to the wants and requirements” of their congregations (Neale xxv; xlii-xliii). The first of these will be well evidenced in Pusey’s sermons in the next chapter, and the second is a reflection of the Tractarian ideal of Reserve, in which the communication of religious truth is tempered in accordance with the ability of the recipient, or recipients, to receive it.

But the third is perhaps the most striking and the most peculiarly Tractarian. It asserts that the parts of the liturgical year (for example, Lent, Advent, the Feast of the Annunciation) are not to be remembered as histories “of the past” but actions “of the present” (Neale lx-lxi).⁵ That is to say, as Neale writes concerning the medieval Church, but clearly as a counsel for the contemporary one,

the events the Church was setting before her children were spoken of as present, or as future; the hearers were not called on, as so often now, to remember that the Church sets before them this, or that the Church would have them remember that; but whatsoever it might be, feast or fast, season of joy or season of sorrow, they were taught to feel that the sorrow or the joy was, and ought to be, as real a matter to them, as to those to whom the events actually first occurred. (lviii-lix)

For Neale, then, the sermon is to be understood, in some sense, as sacramental, a re-presentation of an aspect of the life of the Church, not as a past moment, but as

⁵ It might be argued that Pusey’s first contribution to the *Tracts for the Times*, on the discipline of fasting in the ancient Church and the Church of England, in part attempts to assert just this – that the Church’s fast at, say, Lent, is not simply in remembrance of Christ’s forty days in the wilderness, or of Israel’s forty years in exile, but is a constant re-living of those moments in the life of the Church – a participation. If the Church’s history is living, then it must be a lived history. In this way, the Church year itself becomes a catechetical instrument, but even more than this, almost sacramental.

a present action, just as the Holy Communion is a re-presentation, or re-membrance, of Christ's death on the cross – a “making present”.⁶ Thus Neale's homiletic theory reiterates the Tractarian theory of language. Language, specifically religious language, is “incarnational” in that through it events in the life of the Church are made present for participation.⁷ But if the sermon is “like” a Sacrament, it cannot take the place of a Sacrament, and it is characteristic of Tractarian sermons to both acknowledge the limits of language for discussing the Divine, and to gesture towards the Sacraments as the true, or archetypal, locus of encounter with God. In this sense, the Tractarians distance themselves from Evangelical Anglicans and Dissenters, for whom the sermon occupies a centrality in Divine Service that the Tractarians argue distracts from the worship of God. Preaching is never an end in itself, but always a means towards the union with Christ that is effected only in prayer and the Sacraments (Härdelin 303). As Alf Härdelin argues, for the Tractarians, to regard the sermon as the centre of worship makes people, and not God, the focus. It is “no mere theological mistake, subverting the sacramental system. It makes evident a misconception of the whole idea of worship, for it has put man in the centre and made the worship

⁶ As Thomas Cranmer, the compiler of the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* and father of the English Reformation writes concerning the Holy Communion: “Likewise, when [the priest] ministereth to our sights Christ's holy sacraments, we must think Christ crucified before our eyes, because the sacraments so represent him, and be his sacraments...” (366). Or, as David Haney remarks, “The celebration of the Eucharist is not simply a representation of Christ's action, but a repetition of that event, with an efficaciousness of its own, in which God is not represented but presented” (97-8).

⁷ Hans-Georg Gadamer locates in Kierkegaard's notion of “contemporaneity” a helpful way of conceptualizing the “incarnational” quality of the sermon. He writes: “Contemporaneity, for Kierkegaard ... is a formulation of the believer's task of so totally combining one's own presence with the redeeming act of Christ, that the latter is experienced as something present (not as something in the past) and is taken seriously as such ... Hence, contemporaneity is something that is found especially in the religious act, and in the sermon. The sense of being present is here the genuine sharing in the redemptive action itself” (113). Note that both he and Neale refer to the sermon as an “action”, lending it specifically sacramental overtones.

man-ward instead of God-ward” (Härdelin 305). William Oakely, a nineteenth-century Anglican clergyman, clearly articulates the Tractarian vision of the sermon. For Oakely, the sermon is not separate from the Sacraments, but is an integrated part of the liturgy, and so its sacramental character is in part attendant upon its position *vis-à-vis* the prayers, consecration and administration of the Sacrament in the service. As he writes, somewhat polemically: “The Protestant *preaches* the prayers; while the Catholic regards even the sermon as a part of the [Eucharist]” (cited in Härdelin 305). In this sense the words of the sermon are clearly understood in their proper relationship to their archetype – Christ and his sacramental presence in the world. Thomas Cranmer, the sixteenth-century English Reformer, clearly articulates this vision of the sermon as sacramental word in relation to the Holy Communion as real and efficacious Sacrament when he writes, “as the word of God preached *putteth Christ into our ears*, so likewise, these elements of ... bread and wine, joined to God’s word, do after a sacramental manner put Christ into our eyes, mouths, hands, and all our senses” (41; my emphasis). For Cranmer, as for Neale, it is clear that the sermon actually communicates Christ to the listener, making present the works of redemption in the life of the Church.⁸ Language is an event which allows for participation in the

⁸ Citing Henri de Lubac, Andrew Louth gestures towards this idea of the multiple moments of Christ’s presence in the world (i.e. in both word and Sacrament) in his *Discerning the Mystery: An Essay on the Nature of Theology*. For Louth, Scripture is an instance of the mystery of God’s presence in the world, but that presence must be understood as ever new and re-newing itself, and in relation to the abundance of ways in which God manifests Himself in the world (for example, in preaching and the Holy Communion). He cites de Lubac: “Christianity is not, properly speaking, a ‘religion of the Book’: it is a religion of the word (*Parole*) – but not uniquely nor principally of the word in written form. It is a religion of the Word (*Verbe*) – ‘not of a word, written and mute, but of a Word living and incarnate’ (to quote St. Bernard). The Word of God is here and now, amongst us, ‘which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled’: the Word ‘living and active’, unique and personal, uniting and crystallizing all the words which bear it witness. Christianity is not ‘the biblical religion’: it is the religion of Jesus Christ” (Louth 101) And so Cranmer is able to recognize the presence of Christ in the words of the sermon *and* in the Sacrament of the altar.

mystery of God. It is a type that does not simply stand in for an absent anti-type, but which actually participates in it – putting Christ, for example, “in our ears”.

But, as will be explored at length in the following section, Tractarian homiletics have a more complex relationship to language than one might be led to believe. Language *is* a means of participating in the Church’s mysteries. But Pusey’s sermons also insist on their *inability* to communicate to a congregation the personal encounter with God that is necessary for their salvation, and so metaphorically “unwrite” themselves – the sermon succeeds precisely in the moment of its failure, which is to say, when it convinces us of its own insufficiency. As Pusey writes:

Whoever would meditate, speak, preach, on the Passion of our Lord, thinking that it alone could touch men’s consciences, would act, as if man could give himself love, or that unloving hearts must melt at once at the hearing of so great [a] love... Yet not the doctrine of the cross alone, nor its preaching, nor gazing on it, nor bearing it, but He himself who for us hung thereon must impart its virtue to us... (*Sermons* 180-81)

If we take Coleridge as our example, than we might argue that the symbolic structure of language that the Tractarians inherit from him comes with its own set of anxieties about the limits of language. Can language communicate interiority? How can the inexhaustible character of the words of Scripture and the Creeds be “policed” in order to ensure a correspondance with traditional doctrine? And by extension, what are “true” Scriptural exegeses in Sermons, and what false? These are the sorts of questions that problematize any overly simple assumptions about the status of language for the Tractarians, and lead to the tension-laden duality that characterizes Pusey’s sermons, in which words are both a means of coming to

God, and signs of their own failure (fulfilment and lack). As the third chapter of this thesis demonstrates, however, this is a productive tension.

Having considered briefly the place of sermons in nineteenth-century culture, and having traced the lineaments of a Tractarian theory of homiletics, I will now attempt to elucidate a methodology for reading Pusey's sermons, focusing on Stanley Fish's idea of "self-consuming artifacts" and the idea of "incarnational poetics" introduced in the previous chapter.

II. OUTLINING A THEORY FOR READING PUSEY'S SERMONS

In my attempt thus far to outline a theory of "incarnational poetics", I have relied upon both the work of David Haney and the poetic theory of the Tractarians. I have argued that Coleridge's notion of the symbolic and Wordsworth's conception of language as an incarnation of thought informed the Tractarian's sacramental view of language, in which words are "events" that allow the auditor to apprehend the realities they communicate (in the same way that a symbol both refers to and participates in what it symbolizes). But as I have suggested, multiple anxieties attend the incarnational theory of language. Coleridge's and Wordsworth's Romantic aesthetics invest language with an immense power. However, the susceptibility of language to misapprehension and misuse, and the need to ensure orthodox responses to religious teaching, were anxieties that accompanied the idealistic impulse of Coleridge's, Wordsworth's and the Tractarians' aesthetics. The insufficiencies of language connote a linguistic "lack", much like the lack characteristic of the sinner's relationship to God. But language's symbolic function connotes "fulfilment". It is the dialectic between these notions of language that can assist a reading of Pusey's sermons.

To that end I will outline in greater depth the meaning of “incarnational poetics” and look more closely at the status of the sermon as a literary genre. Stanley Fish’s notion of “self-consuming artifacts” offers a helpful means of negotiating one side of the tensions in Tractarian uses of language. In spite of the profound differences that mark Fish’s and the Tractarians’ linguistic theories (for example, Fish would categorically deny the symbolic theory of language), he does clearly articulate that aspect of Tractarian aesthetics concerned with language’s insufficiencies. Fish discusses the death of the word and I use his theories to elucidate the problem of language’s “mortality” implicit in an incarnational poetics.

As has been suggested, for a poetics to be properly incarnational the word that is spoken must be “mortal” (Haney 19). David Haney argues that this is a defining characteristic of Wordsworth’s poetics – that the incarnation of thought in language (of mind in the material) is a movement from immortality to mortality, with all of the attendant problems and tensions this entails. For Haney, and for my purpose in reading sermons, if the incarnation of Christ in the world is the model of language’s movement from thought to word, then this must include the fact that Christ’s incarnation entails his violent death. It is the condition of the word’s “death” which attends Haney’s idea of poetics that, I maintain, is in part constitutive of the experience of the sermon both as written and as spoken discourse.⁹ An incarnational poetics, then, is by no means an idealistic schema

⁹ It is interesting to note that both Haney and Fish fail to distinguish adequately in their work between the word spoken and the word written. Fish especially, in his work on Donne’s sermons, alternates without distinction between the auditor of a sermon and the reader of one. Though I will focus primarily on the sermon as a written text, I will give attention to first-hand accounts of Pusey’s oratorical skill, as I have already, and wish simply to highlight here the situational differences between one who reads sermons and one who is present at their delivery.

that effaces the problems of discourse (the relationship between word and referent) (Haney 19). Rather, an incarnational poetics is

a process of spirit becoming event, a process by which (by analogy with Jesus entering the world) words move from the ideality of thought to become – *for better and for worse* – things and events in the world which are not simply separable from thought, but which must enter the realm of mortality. (Haney 19; my emphasis)

I want to emphasize Haney’s “for better and for worse” because it reinforces the tensions inherent in this conception of language and because it resonates deeply with the other scholars whose work I will refer to in an attempt to articulate a version of incarnational poetics for reading Pusey. The “for better and for worse” of Haney is notably expressed by Stephen Prickett in his discussions of the divine Word and his relationship to poetic discourse. He argues that Coleridge’s notions of the symbol and the Imagination take as their model the Logos, Jesus, who is able to mediate such apparently diverse and unrelated concepts as materiality and immateriality, mortality and immortality. For both Prickett and Haney, however, that mediation is a source of tension. If nature is a symbol that allows the perceiver to participate in it through the exercise of the Imagination, it is by the same token a deep mystery, much of which is left inarticulate and inaccessible (Prickett, *Words* 144). The dialectic between what remains mysterious and what becomes apparent might be said to constitute the “incarnational” experience. Newman clearly locates this tension in religious language when he discusses its ability to both make present the mysteries of the faith and the simultaneous opacity of such presentations (*Via Media* 1: 254).

Stanely Fish, in his 1972 text *Self-Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature*, outlines a vision of two types of text – or rather,

of two types of *experience* one may have while reading seventeenth-century literature. The first is a *rhetorical* experience, occasioned by a text that affirms the prejudices of its readers. A rhetorical presentation “satisfies the needs of its readers ... The experience of such a form will be flattering, for it tells the reader that what he has always thought about the world is true and that the *ways* of his thinking are sufficient” (Fish 1). The second, and more significant for this study, is the *dialectical* experience of reading. This experience challenges the assumptions of the reader and demands a change of heart or disposition. A presentation is dialectical if it is

disturbing, for it requires of its readers a searching and rigorous scrutiny of everything they believe in and live by ... If the experience of a rhetorical form is flattering, the experience of a dialectical form is humiliating ... The end of the dialectical experience is (or should be) nothing less than a *conversion*, not only a changing, but an exchanging of minds. It is necessarily a painful process (like the sloughing of a second skin) in the course of which both parties forfeit a great deal; on the one side the applause of a pleased audience, and on the other, the satisfaction of listening to the public affirmation of our values and prejudices. The relationship is finally less one of speaker to hearer, or auditor to reader than of physician to patient, and it is as the “good physician” that the dialectician is traditionally known. (Fish 1-2)

But if the dialectical presentation intends a transformation in the auditor, it effects this transformation through, in a sense, its own death. That is to say, the text that aims at conversion is a text that functions on behalf of another authority, in the light of which it recognizes its own insufficiency. Inherent to the function of self-consuming artifacts is a movement from the dictates of rationalism, which for Fish is a faculty that divides and categorizes, to an “anti-rationalism”, which dissolves the distinctions accomplished “rationally” “in the light of an all-embracing unity”:

In a dialectical experience, one moves, or is moved, from the first to the second way, which has various names, the way of the good, the way of inner light, the way of faith; but whatever the designation, the moment of its full emergence is marked by the transformation of the visible and segmented world into an emblem of its creator's indwelling presence ... and at that moment the motion of the rational consciousness is stilled, for it has become indistinguishable from the object of its inquiry. (Fish 3)

How this is accomplished for Fish is unclear, though for both Pusey and Coleridge it is the result of a dialectic in which an inner and divided self is consistently vanquished and then strengthened by the Spirit through prayer, sermons, Scripture and the Sacraments.¹⁰ Significantly, it never has for Coleridge or Pusey the resolution that Fish implies. Rather, for them the religious life is agonistic, “comprising ongoing but on the whole ameliorative exchanges between sin and redemption, error and correction, ego and transcendence” (Zemka 32-33).

The notable difference between Fish and the Tractarians is that where language seems to fall away for Fish in the movement from text to God, for the Tractarians language is the means of that effect. Of course it is for Fish as well, but Fish does not articulate a theory of language *per se*, but rather of its effects, in such a way that the status of language and its importance is neglected once Fish convinces us that the text literally disappears in its consumption. This is clearest when Fish makes a strikingly Coleridgean comment, but without any elucidation. As has been noted, he argues that the visible world becomes “an emblem of its creator's indwelling presence” through the dialectical mode of presentation (Fish

¹⁰ It should be noted that one of the weaknesses of Fish's reading of sermons is his tendency to isolate them from the liturgical action of which they are a part, or, where the sermon was not preached at a communion service, in isolation from the sacramental doctrine attending it. There are numerous ways that people can encounter God. Fish misses the significant case of the Holy Communion, which for the Tractarians (and for John Donne's “high” doctrine of the Sacraments) was the archetypal moment of God's condescension to humanity, in which he gives himself wholly and entirely to be consumed by the faithful.

3). He does not, however, provide for the role of language in such a transformation of vision. For the Tractarians, on the other hand, the words which make possible this transformation are *themselves* sacred inasmuch as they participate in and are essential to it. As in the Sacraments of Holy Communion and Baptism the material elements of Bread and Wine, and Water, respectively, do not disappear but are the vehicles of Divine grace, so too the event of language is not disposed of in the Tractarian model, but stands as the means of engaging with the mysteries of the Church.¹¹ For Keble and the Tractarians, the notion of participation is extended to all language, though in a particular way to religious discourse, and is of course defined by its symbolic structure which gives to words, as it gives to nature, an inexhaustible power of signification. The symbol “with its hidden meanings, is an expression of the inwardness of religious feeling” (Prickett, *Words* 48). The moment that a text betrays its insufficiency is indeed a death of the word, or of the work, but the life that this death engenders is accomplished only in and through the very Word that dies. In this sense, the Tractarian theory of language I am proposing is radically incarnational inasmuch as one and the same word is *both* death and life, just as Christ in one body both dies and rises again. In this, then, one may speak of Pusey’s sermons as self-consuming artifacts, but with the proviso here elucidated concerning the different status accorded to language by the Tractarians than by Fish.

¹¹ It is possible to read Fish’s thoughts on language as, in a sense, radically Protestant or hyper-Catholic – both positions that, ultimately, refute the importance of the material elements for the sacraments. Though this is not the place to show why such extremes should come to similar conclusions, one could argue that it is essentially the result of a misunderstanding of the Incarnation. Furthermore, Fish’s use of the term “emblem” as opposed to “symbol” to denote the way in which the created world intimates the presence of its Creator may betray a sympathy for the connotations of absence associated with the emblem (which stands in for something), as opposed to the notion of presence attendant to the symbol (as has been already discussed).

Neale's discussion of pulpit oratory emphasizes the role of Scripture for effective preaching, echoing St. Augustine's emphasis on the same in *De doctrina christiana*. Neale shows how the language of Scripture must become the language of the effective pulpiteer when he comments upon the medieval preacher Guarric:

He seems to quote the Bible because it is his own natural language, because his thoughts have been so accustomed to flow in Scripture channels, that they will run in no other; and it is sometimes difficult to tell, nor would he perhaps always have known himself, whether he were employing his own words or those of inspired writings. (xxx)

The emphasis on Scripture as the locus of authoritative teaching in Augustine becomes for Fish not simply another moment of a text's (in this case a sermon's) self-consumption, but also of the preacher's effacement/consumption in relation to the primacy of Scripture. For Augustine, wisdom increases in accordance with the degree to which a preacher's thoughts and words conform to the words of Scripture, and this conformity is more significant for preaching than eloquence. What one encounters, then, is a juncture at which the *orally* communicated ethos of the preacher (so important to nineteenth-century homiletics), who is someone exercised in the devotional life, meets the *literary* ground of that exercise, Scripture. Here we can recall the relationship previously discussed between orality and literacy. In this juncture can be located the authority of the preached word. If the word of Scripture consumes the preacher, such that "[e]loquence and wisdom [are] taken away from the orator-preacher and given to Holy Scripture" the preacher is not *simply* erased in the face of Scripture (Fish 32). Even though the preacher points towards Scripture as a more sure testimony of God than himself, the very place of Scripture in the preacher's sermons arises

from the intensity and familiarity of long association and study and prayer (Schaeffer 1141). Such is the situation with Pusey in his *Spiritual Letters* according to the editors J.O. Johnston and W.C.E. Newbolt (*Spiritual* vii). Pusey himself attests throughout his sermons to the limitations of the preached word and to the primacy of Scripture, reflecting his anxieties over the insufficiencies of language. The impulse of Protestant theology that I have suggested characterizes Coleridge's relationship to language is evident in Pusey's concern that language might betray its proper function (through the orator's sinfulness) and so must be monitored by the sacred text itself: "We dare not speak of these mysteries in other words than holy Scripture giveth us; we dare hardly clothe them in our own thoughts" (*Sermons* 243). So there is in conjunction with the death of the word also a death of sorts of the preacher, whose words and ethos aim at a transparency that reveals their author and guide: God. As Fish notes, by emptying his art of its claims to power, the preacher "acknowledges his own powerlessness, becoming like us and like the shell of his sermon a vessel filled by and wholly dependent on the Lord" (69).

There is also a third death – the death of the auditor or reader of the sermon. For Pusey this might also be called the death of the penitent. As will be shown, Pusey both preaches as a penitent and presupposes an audience of penitents, or at least of those desiring that state. In a certain sense, penitence is the condition of possibility for properly attending to the words of Pusey's sermons at all. Fish's reading of *Death's Duall* is extremely helpful in elucidating this "death" as it appears in Pusey. Put simply, the death of the auditor is that aspect of the dialectical experience that aims at, or occasions, conversion. The auditor dies in his or her prejudices and preconceptions – which is to say, at least in part, in his

or her sin – and this death is the means of new life. As Fish points out, this is a movement from self-dependency to dependency on God, and though we are “rendered powerless” in the process, “our powers are increased in the person of Him on whom we depend” (69). For Pusey, as for Fish’s reading of Donne, sin is pervasive, and a crucifying of sin

involves nothing less than the crucifying of the self. No way of ours can be the right way and all our ways are to be given up ... And yet this death and silencing of the self and its pretensions is paradoxically an entrance into a new and better life. For while we may be unable to conform ourselves to Christ, he has already (and literally) conformed Himself to us ... Our sins are utterly crucified in his crucifixion. (Fish 68)

This notion of the death of the subject and his or her subsequent re-birth will be dealt with further below. I want simply to emphasize that the death of the penitent is an integral theme in Pusey’s sermons, and that the ambiguity of death and new life characterizes his preaching – the ambiguity of the surrendered will and the will restored in Christ, which is to say, the complexity of the subject’s *participation* in Christ. As he writes : “It is the very joy of their Lord wherein they shall enter, to joy *not with their own joy*, but with His; to be themselves, *only to be not themselves*; to be, only to have within them the Being of God, which is His love” (*Advent 97*; my emphasis).

As I turn to a reading of Pusey’s *Sermons on Solemn Subjects* I want to emphasize again the dialectic central to Tractarian theories of language. The broadly conceived categories of lack and fulfilment typify the tensions in Tractarian linguistics. On the one hand, language incarnates religious mystery. On the other, there is an abiding sense of its insufficiencies. This chapter has

traced this tension as it appears in Coleridge's and Pusey's notions of redemption (an infinitely deferred progress from sin (lack) to salvation (fulfilment)) and in the relationship between orality and literacy in nineteenth-century homiletics. The following chapter begins with a brief history of the events surrounding the preaching of Pusey's sermons. I will then proceed with a close reading of them in an attempt to further articulate the Tractarian theory of language and homiletics I have posited thus far.

CHAPTER THREE
THE SERMONS AT ST. SAVIOUR'S, LEEDS:
PUSEY'S DIALECTIC OF LACK AND FULFILMENT

I have argued thus far that a dialectic of lack and fulfilment is constitutive of the Tractarians' incarnational poetics. Their poetics follows the dual impulses of Wordsworth's and Coleridge's theories of language which offer both a highly affirmative estimation of language's symbolic character and anxieties over language's insufficiencies. I have broadly included these impulses under the categories of lack and fulfilment, and have employed this dialectic as a means of interpreting the various tensions in Wordsworthean, Coleridgean and Tractarian theories of language. The model of this dialectic is the incarnation, in which Christ both reveals the Godhead (fulfilment) *and* is subject to mortal death (lack).

In this chapter I will show how Pusey articulates such an incarnational poetics in the *Sermons on Solemn Subjects*. Of particular significance is Pusey's ability to show the correspondence between these two aspects of language: the death of the word (its lack) is constitutive of its ability to fulfil. However, I will begin with a consideration of the events surrounding the composition of these sermons. Their historical moment of production is extremely significant, taking place during some of the most turbulent times in the Victorian church's history. Indeed, the sermons are best understood (as is the founding of St. Saviour's itself) on the horizon of ecclesiastical and personal upheaval that marked Pusey's life during the six years prior to their delivery, culminating in Newman's secession to the Roman Catholic communion. In conjunction with an emphasis on the influence of Wordsworth and Coleridge on Pusey and the Tractarians, this brief

historical introduction will provide the framework for a reading of Pusey's sermons.

I. THE HISTORY OF ST. SAVIOUR'S CHURCH: AN OVERVIEW

"And now I fear my note will arrive to turn Easter joy into sorrow," wrote Pusey to his friend H.A. Woodgate on Good Friday, 1845:¹

It relates to our friend Newman. His despondency about our condition has been deepening since 1839; he has done all he could to keep himself where he is; but his convictions are too strong for him, and so now my only hope is that he may be an instrument to restore the Roman Church, since our own knows not how to employ him. His energy and gifts are wasted among us. But for us it is a very dreary prospect. Besides our personal loss, it is a break-up, and I suppose such a rent as our Church has never had. Besides those already unsettled, hundreds will be carried from us, mistrusting themselves to stay when he goes. It is very dismal ... I doubt very much whether next Advent he will be any longer with us ... It makes me almost indifferent to anything, as if things could not be better or worse. However, if one lives, one must do what we can to gather up the fragments that remain, and meanwhile pray for our poor Church. (2: 451-52)

Pusey was correct in his surmise concerning John Henry Newman's future in the Church of England. On October 9, 1845, he was received into the Roman Catholic Church, only three weeks before the consecration of St. Saviour's, Leeds, on October 28, the Feast of St. Simon and St. Jude. In the ensuing week Pusey preached his *Sermons on Solemn Subjects*. The history of St. Saviour's properly begins in 1839 (the year referred to in Pusey's letter to Woodgate). It was a year which saw Newman increasingly unsettled about his place in the Church of England after the Episcopal censure of the Tracts he had been writing

¹ All citations of Pusey's letters are taken from H.P. Liddon's *Life of Pusey* unless otherwise noted.

and editing, and which were one of the central means of disseminating the Oxford Movement's vision. It was also the year that Pusey and Newman were first approached by W.J. Hook, then vicar of Leeds, with the proposal of founding a Church in Leeds on Tractarian principles to accommodate the growing influx of labour into the city. Moreover, it was the year that Pusey's wife died. I will begin this overview of the founding of St. Saviour's with these three "moments" which, it seems to me, mark the founding of St. Saviour's and the tenor of Pusey's *Sermons on Solemn Subjects*. The series of personal losses preceding the composition of the sermons greatly influenced their aesthetic structure and content.

The death of Pusey's wife constitutes a central moment not only in the founding of St. Saviour's, but also for the remaining forty years of Pusey's life. He interpreted her death as punishment for his manifest and hidden sins², though John Keble and Newman counselled him against exaggerated feelings of culpability (Liddon 2: 109). Nevertheless, as H.P. Liddon writes, "Mrs. Pusey's death had effects upon her husband's life which it is not easy to exaggerate ... to use his own phrase, from that hour the world became to him a different world" (2: 107). The primary difference that marked his life was the determination to live his remaining years as a penitent. In keeping with this he undertook such practical measures as curtailing his household expenditures, increasing charitable donations and activities, and severely limiting his public engagements: "His

² As Pusey wrote in May 1839 to John Keble: "You will pray for me that I may humbly and penitently resign her to Him Who gave her to me, and that the sins may be forgiven me for which, out of the usual order of His dealings, she, once so strong, is taken from me" (3: 95). And, after the death of his daughter, Lucy, in 1844 he writes to Keble again: "I am indeed ... in earnest that all my sorrows are the fruits of my own sins, and all my chastisements so many mercies" (3: 95). It's difficult to determine precisely what sins Pusey felt most ashamed of. Rather, it seems that his conscience accused him of a general state of sinfulness. This was accompanied by a scrupulosity that discerned in the least significant errors profound wrongdoing.

sorrow was a call to retire from the world” (Liddon 2: 108). The severity of Pusey’s asceticism, and his consciousness of his own sin, became characteristic of both his preaching and correspondence from this time onwards. As Liddon notes, after the death of Emily Pusey “the nothingness of this world, the disciplinary value as well as the atoning power of the Cross, the awfulness and reality of the Day of Judgement, assume a new prominence in his sermons”³ (2: 109). Indeed, Pusey undertook to build the church in Leeds as an anonymous penitent in order to make a penitential offering to God and to further “fix and deepen [his] sense of sin” (Liddon 3: 95). He arranged for the funds to be procured from a “willing penitent” who, Pusey maintained to all concerned, wished to remain anonymous.

Nowhere is Pusey’s extreme sense of sinfulness more clearly expressed than in a letter to John Keble in September 1846. Striking about this letter is not only the extreme rhetoric, but also the light it casts upon Pusey’s sermons and devotional theology. As John Saward points out in his *Perfect Fools: Folly for Christ’s Sake in Catholic and Orthodox Spirituality*, Pusey’s extreme sense of personal sin corresponds closely with that of Père Jean-Joseph Surin, whose work Pusey had translated and edited in 1844. Surin was a Jesuit Priest in the seventeenth-century who is most famous as an exorcist during the series of possessions at the Ursuline convent in Loudun (famously depicted in Aldous Huxley’s novel *The Devils of Loudun* and John Whitting’s play *The Devils*), but his life was marked afterwards by a twenty-year bout of extreme mental illness with many characteristics of schizophrenia. Saward points out that Pusey was in the midst of translating Surin at the same time that he suffered the loss of his

³ It is worth noting that Pusey’s new found emphasis on the disciplinary value of the Cross in conjunction with the atonement parallels the double movement of Coleridge’s aesthetics discussed in chapter two. The liberatory power of the Romantic sensibility for Coleridge parallels the atonement for Pusey and both moments are tempered by a theological disciplinarity.

daughter and was faced with the imminent secession of Newman, as well as the ecclesiastical disagreements surrounding the founding of the church in Leeds (204). Pusey's explanations for these events (that they are the result of sin) and his melancholic disposition make for a strong resemblance between himself and Surin. Indeed, the rhetoric of his letter to Keble and the writings of Surin are remarkably similar. Both insist on their unsurpassed depravity and sinfulness, though Pusey more often employs images of deformity and disease to represent the state of his soul. As he writes to Keble:

My dear wife's illness first brought to me, what has since been deepened by the review of my past life, how, amid special mercies and guardianship of God, I am scarred all over and seamed with sin, so that I am a monster to myself; I loathe myself; I can feel of myself only like one covered with leprosy from head to foot ... and so I go on, having no such comfort as in good Bp. Andrewes' words, to confess myself 'an unclean worm, a dead dog, a putrid corpse,' and pray Him to heal my leprosy as He did on earth, and to raise me from the dead.... (3: 96-97)

This compares strikingly with Surin's comments in a letter to Père Doni d'Attichy in May 1635: "For three and a half months I have never been without a devil at work beside me.⁴ Things are come to such a pass, permitted by God, I think for my sins..." (cited in Saward 121). And then in a letter to Père Jean Richard in 1655 detailing his experiences during the worst period of his illness:

Although I was not in hell, I felt myself to be as damned as those who were there. That is why my most frightful crime was still to hope to want to try to do good ... When I was seated, I began to accuse myself in this manner, because, quite honestly, all the other sins seemed nothing to me, mere bagatelles, in comparison with that ... And so I confessed as one

⁴ Pusey comments in a sermon that this sense of the presence of the devil ("an almost seen presence of the Evil One") often accompanies those who are being led into the "the deeper ways of the Cross, seasons of darkness, dreariness, disquiet through evil thoughts...." (*Sermons* 192).

who was damned, and not as living man on earth who still had hope. (cited in Saward 125)

According to Liddon, this extreme emphasis on the experience of personal sin is characteristic of those “advanced in holiness of life” (3: 97). For Saward it points out a much neglected aspect of the Catholic Revival in the Church of England during the nineteenth century: the degree to which it was “undergirded by martyrdom, by faithful witness in the face of vilification and mockery, of legal harassment and discrimination, and, as we now see in the case of Pusey, in the face of deep psychological suffering” (207). But for the purposes of reading Pusey’s sermons we should note that throughout them the emphasis on the grievous nature of sin, the need for penitence, and the blessedness of suffering, are recurring tropes. In his first sermon at St. Saviour’s, “Loving penitence”, Pusey preaches on the life of St. Mary Magdalene, the prostitute forgiven by Christ, as the archetype for the penitent. An essential aspect of Pusey’s preaching is the gulf he fixes between the sinful penitent and forgiveness. His tendency is to portray a radical separation between God and the sinner, to bring the auditor or reader almost to the point of despair, and to thereby emphasize more strongly the miraculous charity of God who bridges the gulf through Christ. As he writes in his first sermon concerning the “steps” of penitence:

Our first step then is to contemplate our sins by the sight of His love. Darkness seems blacker when over against the light. *Yet not even thus can we gain contrition or love.* Could we, by any thoughts on God’s mercy, gain love, that would be to convert ourselves. *His* look melted Magdalene’s icy heart, *His* word cast out the seven devils; and would we have the fire of love kindled in us, or the daemons of our sins cast out, we must pray *Him* to give us power to pray, ask for *His* gracious look to bring us to ourselves ... grieve, for love of Him, that we have offended Him, desire to grieve, not for ourselves alone, not so much that we have deserved Hell, not for the glory we have forfeited, not that we are wrecks

of what we might, by His grace, have been, but that we have sinned against Him Who so loved us ... (*Sermons* 15-16; my emphasis).

Pusey's rhetoric makes the soul radically dependent upon God, and even while he discards reasons for our penitence (that we have deserved Hell; that we are wrecks), he is simultaneously asserting that these are indeed the characteristics of our souls, if not the primary motivations for penitence – with a notable resemblance to his letter to Keble cited above.

The penitent and his or her participation in the Cross of Christ also occasions moments of self-referentiality throughout the sermons, in which Pusey holds up the “anonymous penitent” (himself) who built the Church as an image of penitence. In these moments the extremity of Pusey's rhetoric is well evidenced. He employs almost Gothic descriptions of sin and suffering. Speaking anonymously of himself in the first of his sermons, Pusey writes with characteristic vividness:

To-day, then, is a festival of penitence and love. [The penitent] hath, in this, done what he could out of love, imperfect as it must be, to Him Who first loved him; and ye will pray that He Who has this day accepted His offering, will, for our loving Redeemer's sake, accept himself, will bind up the wounds which yet remain, pour into them the austere wine of penitence, and if it seem good to Him, the oil of His consolations, at least the healing Unction of His Spirit, and restore to his soul some portion of the grace and beauty which by sin it lost. (*Sermons* 2)

Though this is not always the case for Pusey, here the “austere wine of penitence” not only precedes consolations but there is no necessary correlation between them. The only thing necessary is penitence. More often, Pusey explicitly identifies suffering as a consolation itself – or rather, not the suffering, but the way in which it writes on the body the marks of Christ's crucifixion: “It were a

dream, then, and contrary to Holy Scripture, to think that we could love the Passion of Christ and not engrave it on our lives” (*Sermons* 176). And as he writes in a sermon entitled “Looking unto Jesus, the means of endurance”, more clearly illustrating his adequation of patient suffering with consolation:

Think not then of evil men, if any crosses come through them, except to bless and pray God for them; yea, love them the more who to thee have been made, by God’s mercy, ministers of good, and have brought to thee, though they knew it not, that most precious token of God’s love, the Cross of Christ ... as men would welcome and honour the messenger of an earthly prince who brings them word of some honour or distinction of this earth, and give him gifts; so love thou whosoever brings to thee that choicest gift from the King of kings, the healing Cross. (*Sermons* 203)

One could refer to instances *ad infinitum* that present suffering in this light.

As has been said, Pusey undertook to build St. Saviour’s at the instigation of W.F. Hook, for whom it was an ideal opportunity to put to practical test the theories of the Tractarians. For Pusey the idea presented itself as a perfect exercise for a penitent and it was as such that he proceeded with plans to build the Church. His only condition was that the inscription “Ye who enter this holy place, pray for the sinner who built it” be affixed in it (Liddon 2: 468).

Comparatively few churches in the nineteenth-century were built with the express intent of conforming to Tractarian principles. Most Tractarian churches were so under the instruction of clergy sympathetic to the Movement. But as Nigel Yates points out in his brief history St. Saviour’s, it stands as an interesting example of a church

founded on ‘high church principles’ with the purpose of popularising ‘high church practices’. [It] occupied a special place in the history of the Oxford Movement in the north of England; founded by one of the leaders of the movement ... to serve a deprived, working-class community... (1)

St. Saviour's was built in a poor district of Leeds with a rapidly increasing population of mechanics and mill-labourers and the church was in some ways the model upon which the later Anglo-catholic "slum ministry" would be based (Liddon 2: 472).⁵ But the building of the church was accompanied by considerable agitation. The Bishop of the Diocese was hesitant about some of the doctrinal positions of the Tractarians and wanted to ensure that inscriptions, church name and church furnishings would not betray hints of "Romanizing". To this end, Pusey had to change the name of the church to St. Saviour's from Holy Cross, because the Bishop was frightened that he might appear to approve of medieval superstitions pertaining to relics of the true cross. Moreover, on the day of the church's consecration, he refused to proceed unless he could be assured that the person to whom the inscription in the church referred was alive, thereby assuring that he would not be perceived to countenance prayers for the dead (one of the more controversial of the Tractarians' doctrinal positions).

It was in August 1845 that Pusey first approached Hook about the possibility of preaching a series of sermons during the week following the church's consecration. In the previous chapter the emphasis in nineteenth-century homiletics on earnestness and sentiment has been discussed, and it is striking to

⁵ "Slum ministry" refers to the work done by priests and nuns of the Church of England in inner-city parishes. The battle over Ritualism in the Church of England was in large part fought in poor neighbourhoods in the nineteenth century. They were often under the care of highly devoted clergy who saw the inner-city as a barren mission field, abandoned by the Church's establishment. The inner-city was the ideal place to prove the worth of a pastoral style that emphasized the Sacraments and "high" Ritual (which was often seen to be the best means of catechizing the illiterate). Slum ministry became a hallmark of Anglo-catholicism, and in many ways Anglo-catholicism was responsible for "stirring up" the conscience of the Church of England in the latter half of the nineteenth-century. It is worth noting that the alignment of Ritualist parishes and inner-city ministry continues today. See Geoffrey Rowell's *The Vision Glorious*, 116-40, for a brief history of Ritualism and slum ministry.

note the way in which Pusey employs similar terms to describe his vision for the sermons. In a letter to Hook on August 11 he writes:

I thought there might be a course of earnest sermons (more directed to the feelings, perhaps, than on ordinary occasions of regular continued instruction) on solemn subjects ... good must come, one should hope, from earnest stirring sermons, with earnest intercession, at least to some. (2: 486)

And again on August 25 he writes: “My wish is that [the sermons] should be, as perhaps I said, warm, energetic, earnest, with both severity and love, and addressed more to the feelings at the end than sermons generally are ... [preaching] too is a gift of God and a means of grace” (2: 487). With Newman’s secession, however, there were moves made to cancel the series of sermons. Hook suspected Pusey’s fidelity to the Church of England given his close friendship with Newman, and he also suspected Pusey’s reluctance to engage in anti-Roman Catholic polemics (Hook himself was at times rabidly anti-Catholic). In the end, the sermons were delivered, though of the nineteen sermons (only ten of which were written by Pusey) he ended up delivering seventeen. Some, such as Keble, were kept from preaching their sermons due to family illness, and others felt unable to appear in public following Newman’s conversion given the significance of its blow to the Movement. But for Pusey the only reasonable response to Newman’s secession was to continue with the sermons. Writing to Hook on October 16, twelve days before the consecration of the church, he is certain that “increased prayer, and more devoted exertion, are the only remedies of this crisis” (2: 490). Indeed, for Pusey it was profoundly a lack of prayer that occasioned Newman’s leaving. In a letter to the *English Churchman* a week after Newman was received into the Roman Catholic Church, Pusey wonders if it may

not be that “we have forfeited him because there was ... so little love and prayer? And so now, then, in this critical state of our Church, the most perilous crisis which it ever passed, must not our first lesson be increase of prayer?” (2: 461). It is possible to read these comments as a “frame” for Pusey’s sermons at St. Saviour’s. In his Preface to the sermons he writes explicitly about the departure of Newman and even dedicates the sermons to “those severed in the flesh yet united in Him”.⁶ Indeed, Newman’s departure seems to inform Pusey’s intentions for the sermons and also marks the state of mind in which Pusey approached them. Writing about preparations for the sermons, Pusey says:

As the time drew near, trial seemed to hang over the plan. Heavy distress, still more for the Church’s sake than for his own, broke at last suddenly on the writer; and for the first time, he had to go forth to his labour, apart from the friend of above twenty-two years, who was to him as his own soul, with whom had been shared what little he had himself been enabled to do to God’s service in our Church, and whose counsel had been to him for the last twelve years, in every trial, the greatest earthly comfort and stay. Of those also, to whom he looked to assist him in the plan, some who would kindly have shared in it, were hindered ... Still, what was undertaken simply for the Glory of God and the good of souls, it seemed wrong to abandon; and the plan was continued, in trust in Him, to Whom, it was hoped, souls might thereby be won. (*Sermons* ii-iii)

Pusey approached the sermons, then, from a desolate place, bereft of the company of Newman (“who was to him as his own soul”) and of the company of other sympathetic clergy. But as is characteristic of Pusey, this desolation is somehow prophetic of future joy, a joy perceived through prayer and self-sacrifice. So

⁶ Newman’s departure not only affected the sermons delivered by Pusey at St. Saviour’s. It also dramatically affected the first fifteen years of the church’s existence. Amid charges of Romanizing and numerous other pressures, seven of the first twelve vicars and curates of St. Saviour’s followed Newman’s example and joined the Roman Catholic Church. Newman himself received some of them into the Roman communion.

Pusey writes at the end of his Preface, explicitly commenting on Newman's departure again:

It seems hopeless, for the time, that many of us can understand one another. It will be a great gain if ... we censure not one another. There are enemies enough abroad, moral and intellectual, which may gain possession of the citadel while our attention is draw off in another direction ... If we, as Christ's faithful soldiers, are, within and without, in earnest warfare against His enemies, we shall, in the very warfare itself, the armour we bear, His watchword, His gracious help, His love, the more readily recognise those whom He vouchsafes to call 'My friends.' God give us grace more and more to seek Him; so, if we find Him, we shall in Him find each other who shall have sought Him our common Centre; shall in His light and love at length understand one another; shall see in one another the work of His Grace, and love one another in Him, and Him in one another. (*Sermons* viii-ix)

For our further considerations of the sermons below its important to keep in mind Pusey's ability to translate suffering and hardship into a vision of the Divine (as in this passage, where Pusey transfigures the pain of division and misunderstanding in the Church into a vision of unity in Christ). Herein can be traced the lineaments of the dialectic of lack and fulfilment previously mentioned. In passages like these, which abound throughout the sermons, Pusey seems to be writing miniature "Divine Comedies", illustrating an ascent from chaos and confusion (the inferno), through purgative struggle (purgatory), to the Divine vision (paradise and Dante's celestial rose). As Liddon writes concerning Pusey's *Sermons on Solemn Subjects*: "The penitent is conducted from the abyss of humiliation and defilement ... to the Presence Chamber of heaven" (2: 497). The significance of penitential suffering for Pusey's preaching – which for Pusey is participation in the crucifixion of Christ – will be made clear in the following discussion.

Having outlined some of the important contextual influences on Pusey's *Sermons on Solemn Subjects* preached at St. Saviour's, Leeds, I will now turn to consider the sermons themselves, keeping in mind what has been said about Pusey's emphasis on penitence and on the ascent to the Divine.

II. THE *SERMONS ON SOLEMN SUBJECTS*

I have argued that the sermon provides the ideal literary genre in which to examine the vision of the Oxford Movement, a Movement primarily concerned with personal sanctity and devotion. It is an ideal genre because in its aesthetic form meets doctrinal principle and pedagogical intent, thus taking up three central foci of the Catholic Revival in the Church of England (aesthetics, dogma and teaching). In Pusey's sermons we encounter the most articulate expression of aspects of the Movement. The centrality of the Cross, the mystical language, the emphasis on the Sacraments and penitence, are all powerfully presented by Pusey, and in them one can discern the Movement's Coleridgean and Wordsworthian heritage, particularly in Pusey's assertion of the priority of God in the constitution of the human subject and in his discussions of nature as symbolic of the Divine, respectively. And in all of this the peculiar characteristics of the Tractarian aesthetic are present: the doctrines of Reserve, Typology and Analogy.

But it is perhaps the intensity of Pusey's language, his run-on sentences, the tendency to pile image upon image without a clearly discernible meta-structure, that most characterize Pusey's sermons. This has led Yngve Brilioth, in his history of Tractarianism, to refer to Pusey as the "*doctor mysticus*" of the Movement, and Owen Chadwick to write that Pusey's

language is more mystical ... than the language of any other Tractarian, and in its dwelling upon the participation of the Christian in the divinity of Christ, the union of the soul with its Redeemer, can rise to heights of beauty ... Never would you use the word *ecstatic* of the published writings of Keble or Newman ... The word springs naturally to the mind of one reading the sermons of Pusey. (39)

If there is a central theme in the sermons under consideration here, it is certainly the one Chadwick mentions: the soul's participation in Christ, or Christ's indwelling in the soul. What I wish to accomplish in this reading of Pusey's *Sermons on Solemn Subjects* is less an exhaustive reading of the text, than a "diagnostic" one. I will examine the dialectic of lack and fulfilment that characterizes Wordsworth's and Coleridge's incarnational poetics as it is re-articulated in Pusey's preaching. I will also revisit the "three deaths" I outlined in the previous chapter: the death of the word, of the preacher and of the auditor or reader. I will begin, however, with more comments on the main characteristics of Pusey's homilies.

In her "Introductory essay" to *The Evangelical and Oxford Movements*, Elizabeth Jay notes the similarities between the Evangelical revival in the Church of England and the Catholic revival. Both felt that religion "appealed first to the heart", and both wanted to rectify (though in different ways) traditional High Churchmanship (Jay 10). But for the Tractarians there was a limitation in the doctrinal position of the Evangelicals. The Evangelical insistence on the "assurance" of the true believer (that he or she can know his- or herself to be saved), allowed too much subjectivity in the realm of faith. It gave unwarranted scope to the feelings to determine for individuals whether or not they were saved and, according to the Tractarians, led too easily into the same pitfalls that marked rationalism and liberalism – self-contemplation and pride. The Tractarians, on the

other hand, redressed the perceived imbalance in Evangelicalism by emphasizing the objective activities of God that can lead to the reformation of the soul. They insisted that God himself acts for the conversion of souls in and through the ordinances of the Church and its Sacraments, and that Evangelicalism made too much of the individual's decision to "accept Christ" at the disparagement of the Church's divinely ordered guidance and means of grace (Jay 10). Citing Newman's *Lectures on Justification*, Andrew Louth points out this tension: "[Evangelical Protestants] consider that Christ's Sacrifice saves by the mind's contemplating it. This is what they call casting themselves upon Christ ... Surely we ought so to *come* to Christ ... But the question is, in what form and manner He *gives* Himself to us" ("Manhood" 78). Or, as Pusey says more emphatically, "...not the doctrine of the Cross alone, nor Its preaching, nor gazing on It, nor bearing It, but He Himself Who for us hung thereon must impart Its virtue to us" (*Sermons* 181). Nevertheless, Pusey's preaching is stylistically indebted to Evangelicalism and the late eighteenth-century preaching of the Wesleys, with their characteristic Methodist "enthusiasm" that at times manifests itself in Pusey's ecstatic prose.

But if the Tractarians rejected Evangelical claims concerning the personal assurance of salvation, which is to say that they turned their attention away from a simple opposition between the states of regeneracy and unregeneracy (or the predestined and the not-predestined; the elect and the non-elect), precisely this tension remains characteristic of Pusey's preaching. The Tractarians were preoccupied with the process of sanctification, which sees conversion as a life-long activity of prayer and devotion (Jay 12). But Pusey's representation of the process of sanctification (and Yngve Brilioth wonders if this may be true of the

Movement in its entirety) often relies upon a dialectic of assurance/non-assurance for its articulation. As Pusey himself writes in a sermon from the collection *Sermons during the Season from Advent to Whitsuntide*, “There is not safety, brethren, but never to think ourselves safe” (212). Brilioth correctly identifies the fruit of this tension in the Tractarian insistence on the soul’s striving towards God, and especially in Pusey’s emphasis on the role of the will in the Christian life – the “fear and trembling” that must accompany the working-out of one’s salvation, as St. Paul says (257-58). Its worthwhile citing Brilioth’s comments at length:

Should the idea of predestination combined with the denial of the possibility of security ... have contributed to shape this *Via Media* of the religious temperament between the Lutheran confidence in God’s promise accepted by faith, and the Roman security in the *barca di San Pietro*? The characteristic feature of this *Via Media* then would be ... a feeling of unrest, an anxious striving after a maximum as the best possible guarantee for the election of its possessor – a maximum of holiness of living and self-sacrifice, a maximum of doctrine in mystical response to a maximum of life.... (257)

It is perhaps most useful to think of this tension less as one that is bound strictly to the theological categories employed by Brilioth, than in terms of a general tension between lack and fulfilment. I have already suggested that this tension manifests itself in the gulf that Pusey fixes between the sins of the penitent and the promise of forgiveness, in such a way as to forcefully highlight the benevolence of God’s condescension to humanity in Christ.⁷ Constantly tempering such binaries, however, Pusey’s presentation of heaven employs the rhetoric of need *and* satisfaction, impoverishment *and* fulfilment:

⁷ In a sermon included in the *Sermons on Solemn Subjects*, Keble helpfully expresses this tension when he writes: “And try to have the two last words, ‘Come ye blessed of my Father’, and ‘Depart from Me ye cursed,’ forever ringing in your ears, that walking in humble fear and love, you may make sure of the one, and forever be safe from the other” (“Hell” 103).

Where shall be an end of loving, where love is endless, infinite? or of gazing on Beauty Infinite, where that very Beauty by our longing and its Sight shall draw us more into Itself; where is no weariness, no satiety, but a blessed union of thirst and satisfying fullness; where desire shall have no pang or void, and fulness shall but uphold desire; for both shall be Perfect, Unfailing, Love, unfailing through God's Gift, as the Very Essence of God, Who is Love.⁸ (*Sermons* 280-81)

In this vision of Heaven, Pusey employs characteristic rhetorical devices. He layers image upon image in an attempt to articulate a single truth – or, perhaps more appropriately, to persuade the auditor or reader to a single *vision*. What Stanley Fish writes elsewhere concerning St. Augustine is equally applicable to Pusey – that he strives less to “validate propositions” concerning theological principles, than to bring the participating subject to a vision in which the *divisions* occasioned by discursive reasoning are reconciled (41, 75).

Pusey pursues his end through a rhetorical style that is both similar to and diverges from that of other eminent Tractarians. Though he preaches “from the heart and to the heart”, he does not employ the conversational tone favoured by most nineteenth-century preachers. His prose-style, rather, makes it difficult for “readers and listeners alike” to trace the “intellectual lines of the argument” of his sermons; “instead they have to submit themselves to the tenor of thought and feeling which is established as parallel clauses and phrases are piled one upon another to offer different pictures of one truth” (Jay 188). As Jay further points out, Pusey’s use of archaic grammar, syntax and vocabulary, all gesture towards

⁸ Pusey’s comments here bear a striking resemblance to those of the Greek Church Father, St. Gregory of Nyssa, an influential figure for the Oxford Movement. St. Gregory writes: “And this is the real meaning of seeing God: never to have this desire satisfied. But fixing our eyes on those things which help us to see, we must ever keep alive in us the desire to see more and more” (233). And elsewhere: “...for the true vision of God consists rather in this, that the soul that looks up to God never ceases to desire Him” (239).

the “world of Biblical and liturgical translation with which his own work had familiarized him”, while at the same time distancing him from the simplicity of style favoured by many pulpiteers in the nineteenth-century (188). His use of ostensibly abstract terminology, however, by no means undermined the effectiveness of his preaching. On the contrary,

The choice of a style so wholly remote from contemporary speech or prose as a channel for a personally ecstatic vision of God’s mysteries undoubtedly went far to create the sense of timeless spirituality attested to by this listener: ‘He is certainly, to my feelings, more impressive than any one else in the pulpit, though he has not one of the graces of oratory. His discourse is generally a rhapsody, describing, with infinite repetition and accumulateness, the wickedness of sin, the worthlessness of earth, and the blessedness of heaven. He is still as a statue all the time he is uttering it, looks as white as a sheet, and it as monotonous in delivery as possible. While listening to him you do not seem to see and hear a *preacher*, but to have visible before you a most earnest and devout spirit, striving to carry out in this world a high religious theory.’ (Jay 188)

According to this spectator, Pusey’s oratorical peculiarities and use of biblical archaisms align him with the spiritual order and evince an earnestness that lends authority to the spoken word.

The tension that I am outlining in Pusey’s sermons is, in fact, largely responsible for the persuasiveness of Pusey’s preaching. From it he gathers a “rhetorical momentum” characterized by an oscillation between opposing factors in a dialectic. A prime example of this is his 1843 sermon “The Holy Eucharist, a Comfort to the Penitent”. What is striking about this example is not only how it elucidates Pusey’s oratorical style, but that it offers hints concerning the nature of the dialectic of impoverishment/fulfilment that I have been tracing. Simply put, this dialectic finds articulation in a reconciling vision (such as the vision of heaven cited above) inasmuch as, for Pusey, the moment of impoverishment is

“always already” a divine moment since it parallels the crucifixion of Christ. We might extend this argument to Wordsworth’s incarnational poetics, as does David Haney. For Wordsworth, language must be an incarnation of thought, and he fears its lapse into a purely representational discourse that figures words as mere “clothing”. But both of these aspects of language can be accounted for within an incarnational poetics that extends to language the mortality that attended Christ’s incarnation. If words that signify symbolically (*à la* Coleridge) are traced with divine meaning, then words that fail to signify properly (Wordsworth’s “counterspirits”) can be read as moments of mortality – but within the economy of the incarnation (and by extension, the resurrection) these moments refer back to the symbolic. The “failed” word (or the word that dies), then, is laden with meaning. It is helpful to think of the status of the word that fails to signify properly *vis-à-vis* symbolic signification in relation to the penitent’s apparent distance from God in Pusey sermons occasioned by his or her suffering. The penitent’s suffering is simultaneously a sign of God’s infinite proximity inasmuch as it is perceived as conforming to Christ’s suffering. If the heavenly vision is one of participation in the Godhead, then Pusey argues that even in our suffering and sorrow we are already participants therein. Likewise, the word that dies always, in and through that death, gestures towards – even participates in – the plenitude of symbolic signification. This dialectic’s reconciliation, however, is in some sense “negative” – that is, it always relies upon terms of opposition to articulate it, thereby implying a perpetually deferred realization (Pusey’s heaven is “thirst *and* satisfying fulfilment”; Wordsworth’s and Coleridge’s affirmative theorizations are *always* attended by anxieties). But it is important to note how

nothing falls outside this dialectic, especially for Pusey.⁹ Suffering is taken up in the vision of heaven, weakness perfected – the suffering and weakness are not simply superceded, but *transfigured* in Pusey’s vision. As he writes in the 1843 sermon:

Our One Lord is to us, in varied forms, all, yea more than all, His disciples dare ask or think. All are His Life, flowing through all His members, and in all, as it is admitted, effacing death, enlarging life. As blind, He is our Wisdom; as sinful, our Righteousness; as hallowed, our Sanctification; as recovered from Satan, our Redemption; as sick, our Physician; as weak, our Strength; as unclean, our Fountain; as darkness, our Light; as daily fainting, our daily Bread; as dying, Life Eternal; as asleep in Him, our Resurrection. (“Holy” 189)

As every moment of impoverishment becomes an avenue of grace for Pusey, so likewise for an incarnational poetics.

Pusey’s emphasis on the participation of the soul in the life of God is the most significant moment for Pusey’s homiletics, the explication of which demands a return to Fish’s “self-consuming artifacts”, as well as to the Tractarian homiletic theory derived from J.M. Neale in chapter two. As I have suggested, Pusey’s idea of participation in the Godhead begins in penitence (when the life of the penitent is conformed to that of the crucified Christ) and continues in heaven, but always employs a rhetoric of lack and fulfilment. It is noteworthy that Pusey’s and the Tractarian’s vision of God is characterized by a sense of awe and mystery, and that the “realities of religion form a *mysterium tremendum*” for them (Brilioth 216). This characterization inflects the vision of union with God

⁹ Brilioth notes that it is with Pusey that such an intense devotion to the “theology and mysticism of the Cross” first appears in the Movement (249).

expounded by Pusey.¹⁰ Pusey discusses it in terms of God's unimaginable condescension, the extremity of human unworthiness and the magnanimity of God.¹¹ God's willingness to allow human beings to participate in the Divine life constitutes a threshold at which language fails, or at least the language of Pusey's preaching. As he notes in the Preface to the sermons, for the exposition of the great mysteries of the faith he has chosen to rely on the "words and thoughts of holy writers, rather than his own" (*Sermons* iv). And throughout the sermons he characteristically defers to the words of the saints, as when commenting on Christ's assertion that he will dwell with the person who keeps his commandments he writes: "... on so great a mystery I had rather give the comment of the holy Augustine than my own" (*Sermons* 222). But the "lack" in Pusey's preaching is not simply filled by words from the Church Fathers, and here I want to suggest that Pusey's preaching begins to correspond with Fish's theorizations. Rather, for Pusey the enterprise of preaching is plagued with insufficiencies. As Pusey explicitly states:

¹⁰ The doctrine that Pusey relies on for the articulation of this process by which God having become human in Christ allows for human beings to become divine (while maintaining the ontological distinction between the created and the Creator) is called "deification", and its primary expositors are the Greek Church Fathers, most famously in St. Athanasius's dictum "God became man that man might become God". For an exposition of its significance in the Anglican tradition see A.M. Allchin's *Participation in God: A Forgotten Strand in Anglican Tradition* and Andrew Louth's essay "Manhood into God: the Oxford Movement, the Fathers and the Deification of Man". One should note that Allchin's treatment of the issue is insufficiently attentive to the presence of this doctrine in the Prayer Book liturgy of the Anglican Church, and is less "forgotten" or foreign to the English Church than he might lead one to believe. Indeed, one might argue that it is constitutive of Anglican spirituality and devotional theology.

¹¹ It is interesting to note the rhetoric employed by Andrew Louth to describe this process of union with God in his essay. He captures the intensity of the Tractarian vision of God (the *mysterium tremendum*) with his use of terms such as "alarming" and "painful" to describe the process. As he writes: "To receive the fruits of Christ's sacrifice in ourselves is, then, a costly and painful process: as costly and painful as the transformation of our warped and wounded nature into the purity and power of God"; and again, "Alarming, then, and costly and painful, this doctrine of the indwelling Christ, this doctrine of deification!" ("Manhood" 78, 79).

Whoever would meditate, speak, preach, on the Passion of our Lord, thinking that It alone could touch men's consciences, would act, as if man could give himself love, or that unloving hearts must melt at once at the hearing of so great love ... Yet not the doctrine of the Cross alone, nor its preaching, nor gazing on it, nor bearing it, but He Himself Who for us hung thereon must impart Its virtue to us.... (*Sermons* 180; 181)

And again:

My brethren, who might not dwell forever on these words? *and yet I have told you, as yet, nothing of their reality; nor can I tell you;* for what have I been speaking of? the Wisdom, Holiness, Power, Glory, Beauty, Love of God. *And to know these we must see Himself.* The ear cannot catch them; *the tongue cannot speak of them....* (*Sermons* 269; my emphasis)

For Pusey, language fails, but therein achieves its proper and most effective end.

How language and the sermon achieve this end differs for Fish and Pusey.

As Fish notes, the “weak words” of the human sermon are far from ineffective (69). But as I suggested in the previous chapter, the death of the word for the Tractarians is less a simple gesturing away from itself (or a consumption of itself as with Fish), than a gesturing *into* itself, the word figured as a gateway, or symbol (*à la* Coleridge) for encounter with God. That is to say, the temporality of the word as event is wedded to the eternal image it signifies. Even if it fails to signify adequately (which is to say symbolically), the word of the sermon, by its very poverty, manifests the mysterious condescension of God in the Incarnation, and so participates in the dialectic of incarnational poetics that I have been tracing. As such, Pusey is able to speak of sermons as a means of grace, as quasi-sacramental (Liddon 2: 487). Pusey corroborates this in his final sermon, in which he imbues the very *subjects* of the sermons preached with mystical significance:

The deadliness of sin, the sinner's death, final judgement, eternal woe, penitence, the Cross, the Sight of God, the bliss of Eternity, surely the very names might startle us from our listlessness, and bid us gird ourselves to more devoted service? Are they not the very Voice of Christ to wake the dead? (*Sermons* 342)

If, then, lack and fulfilment characterize the rhetoric of Pusey's sermonizing, they also characterize his homiletic theory, which both disparages the efficaciousness of the sermon, highlighting its insufficiencies, *and* valorizes the mystical presence of Christ in the sermon. Sermons open avenues for the reader or auditor to encounter Christ.

As Pusey emphasizes throughout his sermons, God must *of himself* impart himself to the auditor. For the Tractarians this is achieved principally in two ways: the Sacraments and Scripture. Bound up with these are the two other "deaths" I want to locate in Pusey's sermons: of the preacher and of the auditor. Pusey's account of Scripture in his *Sermons on Solemn Subjects* is striking. It resonates deeply with what has been said of the Tractarian relationship to language thus far, and with Neale's homiletic theory. For Neale, one of the distinguishing features of the great preacher is a familiarity with Scripture in which the very words and images of the Bible become characteristic of the preacher's own vocabulary. Pusey's long and arduous Old Testament studies deeply imbued his written and spoken work with the tenor of Scripture. Of more significance, however, is the way he discusses Scripture in the sermons. For Pusey, Scripture is the means of breaching the wall of sin that separates humanity from God, and he discerns in it a sacramental character. Keble, in a sermon collected in *Sermons on Solemn Subjects* but preached by Pusey, clearly expresses this vision of Scripture when he comments that

every one of the kind words, gracious looks, and most merciful and bountiful actions of our Lord, performed while he was here on earth, *and written for our comfort in the holy Gospels*, becomes a sort of token, or pledge, or *sacrament*, of His perfect absolution and blessing, to be pronounced at the last Day. (“The Last Judgement” 77; my emphasis)

So Scripture contains the promise of grace to come, according to Keble, and communicates this promise through the images of Christ’s life. What is striking, however, is how the images of Christ’s life in Scripture become effective for Pusey precisely through their ability to make *present* the life of Christ and the words of God. This efficacy depends upon their ability to do more than simply conjure past events, in the same sense that the Holy Communion does not simply memorialize the death of Christ. Both make him and his life present in a similar manner: the “materials” of each (language; bread and wine) participate symbolically in the realities they denote. As Pusey writes, Scripture actively pierces the “heavy cloud . . . which man’s sins have spread between him and his God” (*Sermons* 242). Moreover, Scripture is, like the Incarnation, an “unutterable condescension of our God, Who thus deigns to shadow out His love to us sinners under the words of the deepest love which He hath given us” (Pusey 245). Pusey presents Scripture as an inexhaustible mystery, communicating to the faithful the mystery of God’s love. Pusey elevates Scripture above the preacher’s words and gestures towards it as the “spirit which informs them” (Fish 69). As Isaac Williams, the friend of Pusey and fellow Tractarian, writes concerning the relationship of Scripture to the individual: “Holy Scripture holds up to his eyes, as it were in a glass, both his own heart and also the world around him; holds it up to his view as it is in God’s sight” (“Temper” 133). Scripture is figured as an interpretive key. In the mirror of Scripture the divine signification of things is revealed. Scripture is the means of locating God in the world. This view of

Scripture, coupled with the death of the word articulated thus far, entails a second death: of the preacher. As Fish points out, the celebration of Scripture as the discursive form *par excellence* places both the auditor and preacher in subjection to it; and the interpretive power of Scripture, and its manifold significations, acquire a priority over the words of the preacher. Moreover, as in St. Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*, Scripture is revealed as the "spirit" informing the words of the preacher, *and* the preacher's task is at the same time the "setting forth" of Scripture – Scripture as the beginning and the end of preaching. In this sense Pusey recapitulates the dialectic of orality and literacy discussed in chapter two. Pulpit oratory is always attended by a literary "proof". Scripture guides and confirms the words of the preacher.

The "contemporaneity" of Scripture parallels that given to the structure of the Church year by Neale, and there is an interesting relationship between the two. The intent of the Church year and its various Feasts and Fasts is to reproduce annually, to borrow from Keble, the "kind words and gracious looks" of Christ's life recorded in the Scriptures. In this way, the events of Scripture are actively made present in the life of the Church – they are "incarnated" through the series of commemorations that mark the Christian year. But for this to be effective, according to Neale, the preacher must insist that the events commemorated have as much claim on the emotions of contemporary congregations as on those to whom the events first occurred. This points strikingly to the sacramental and symbolic character both of the words of the preacher (his words stand as gates through which the mysteries of the Church can be entered), and of Scripture (whose images cease to be strictly narrative accounts of past events and become, instead, symbols through which individuals actually and

actively participate in the events detailed). Pusey states this strongly and strikingly in his comments on the Church year. In them he emphasizes its sacramental character and gives it, and by extension the Scriptures, the ability to incorporate the faithful into the life of Christ. He writes:

In the holy season of expectation of His Coming, or His actual Birth in the Flesh, or the blessed austere days of penitence, or the Passion or Resurrection or Ascension, or the Descent of the Holy Ghost, the wonders of old time are again renewed. He Whom we look for again cometh. He is born in the faithful heart which watches and longs for Him; their 'eyes see their salvation;' the Virtue of His Fasting hallows theirs, and shields their soul from temptation; they die anew in His Death; rise in His Resurrection; ascend with Him, from Him receive the Promise of the Father. *Such mysterious efficacy has His Incarnation, that the very seasons of His precious Acts and Sufferings are full of Blessing.* (Sermons 341-42; my emphasis)

This is a significant moment in which the symbolic nature of the Church year and the Scriptures implies that they not simply refer to, but participate in, the mysteries they represent; and like the Sacraments, they extend to people the possibility of participating in those same events.

But Scripture is not the only means by which people may encounter God. Along with it are the Sacraments, and sermons assist individuals' approach to the Divine through their emphasis on the Sacraments.¹² Its worth keeping in mind Keble's comments in response to the centrality of the sermon in Evangelical worship. He argues that the sermon should refer people to the sacraments. More generally, one may say that the Tractarians see the sermon (the preaching of the word) and the Holy Communion (the administration of the Word) as intimately

¹² It should be noted, however, that the Sacraments are always bound to Scripture. The words of institution at the Holy Communion, for example, are necessary for the Sacrament to be effected.

connected with one another. It is perhaps possible to excavate something of this mutuality between the preached word and the administered Word in the Prayer Book Intercessions read by the Priest at Holy Communion services, in which he prays: “And to all thy people give thy heavenly grace, and specially to this congregation here present, that, with meek heart and due reverence, they may *hear and receive* thy holy Word” (76; my emphasis). It is possible to read a double signification in the “hear and receive” of this prayer. The congregation is to hear and receive the words of Scripture read in the lessons¹³ as well as expounded in the sermon; and more particularly, the congregation is to *hear* the lessons and sermon, but *receive* the Word in the Sacrament. Pusey no less than the other Tractarians (indeed, perhaps more so) emphasizes the importance of the Sacraments as a means of union with God. Indeed, his rhetoric seems always to be *implying* the Sacraments even when not explicitly mentioning them given its insistence on the condescending moment of Christ in his Incarnation, and on the need for Christ himself to take possession of the soul (hence his concern about the limitations of sermons). And for Pusey, within the economy of his preaching, the indwelling of Christ necessitates a third death: of the auditor. It might be argued that it is at the threshold of the sermon, at the limit where it both makes possible entry into the mysteries of Christ and where it simultaneously acknowledges its own limitations (the sermon as “lack” and “fulfilment”), that the auditor’s death arises. It is, to return to Fish, that moment in the dialectical experience of the sermon at which the auditor or reader is forced to abandon both any misplaced trust in the efficacy of the preached word, and any trust in the competence of him- or herself to actualize a union with God. But unlike Fish, who seems to envision

¹³ There are two Lessons appointed for the Communion service in the Prayer Book. They differ according to the occasion in the Church year.

a single moment of conversion, Pusey offers a vision of conversion without consummation. According to Pusey, conversion is a steady progression of the soul through an infinite number of conversions – and so it is for Coleridge as well (Zemka 65). Increased charity, devotion and prayer all demonstrate the movement of conversion, but without any definite “assurance” of one’s salvation. Conversion is a movement from self-dependency to dependency on God in which the self dies, but is at the same time revived by the claim of Christ on the soul (the condition of possibility for that claim is the eradication of the individual’s conceit of self-sufficiency): “While we trusted in ourselves we went astray” (Pusey, *Sermons* 205). Pusey’s sermons are permeated with images of death and re-birth in Christ. Characteristic of his writing concerning this is his attempt to radically “unwrite” traces of the old-self and to thereby indicate the “newness” of the self possessed by Christ:

In one word, we ... shall see Whom we now see not, and we who shall see, shall be other selves, and have other powers wherewith to see, even His, Whom we shall see, God ... We shall still be, for it is said, He ‘shall be in all;’ all then shall still be: we shall be ourselves and yet shall be other selves; because ‘God shall be All things in us’ ... We shall not cease to be; but God being All things in us, we shall be other selves, and, as St. John says, ‘like Him;’ our powers of mind shall be ours; our substance, ours; but all, full of God ... God shall be All in all, so that in each we can but love God. (*Sermons* 275-77)

The converted soul becomes a symbol of Christ to the world, a participant in the reality he or she attests to. Note that Pusey represents this sacramentally. Self-hood is not obliterated in God, but transfigured. The “material” of the individual is maintained, but perfected by grace (just as the elements in the Holy Communion remain after the consecration, but are perfected by grace).

Having traced the deaths of the word, preacher and auditor/reader in Pusey's sermons, I want to consider briefly Pusey and Tractarian aesthetics. Particularly, I want to note the way in which the Tractarian vision of nature and Analogy is articulated in Pusey's sermons. I have contended thus far that the Tractarian vision of nature, following Wordsworth and Coleridge, "reads" it as a textual site evidencing the hidden mysteries of God. The created world, for Pusey, is a divine alphabet, shadowing forth God's will and purpose, if we could but read his imprint thereon. In the *Sermons on Solemn Subjects*, no less than elsewhere, Pusey pursues this vision of nature and its analogical relationship to, and symbolic participation in, God:

... each blade of grass, each herb of the field, every leaf of every tree, has its own separate history; no two unfold themselves alike; yet thus manifold as are God's workings, and countless His works, all by one viewless harmony join together to set forth their Maker's praise. (331)

In his final sermon of the series he uses vegetative growth and decay as metaphors for the Christian life (339). What is striking about this use is that for Pusey and the Tractarians such analogies are not simply the product of the perceiving mind, or the creative impulse. Rather, God has hidden the meaning of his words in his works, and all of nature speaks implicitly of the mysteries of the faith. Its theological significance inheres in it. The significance of this is best elucidated in a sermon that Isaac Williams contributed to the collection. In it he parallels decay and illness in the natural world with the Cross:

In nature also is God ever speaking to us from the Cross, and inviting to the Cross, but ever covering that His Cross with unspeakable love. What does decay and death and sickness, and 'the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain together,' teach us but the Cross? But in decays of

Autumn and in setting suns, and in pains of all suffering creation, and in sick beds and death, the Cross is blended with loving-kindness, with gleams of beauty, and consolations, and peaceful hopes; and the darkness of night brings forth the unspeakable and hidden glories of the heavens that encircle us, and like love itself, when appearing most dark, embrace and enfold us most distinctly and lovingly. No calm and peace is so exquisite as that which is connected with sickness and affliction; so that the meanest flower after the sick room is, says the poet, as an 'opening Paradise.' For Gethsemane has become to us now in the place of Eden. ("Virtue" 161)

Williams conflates the "lack" of Gethsemane with the plenitude of Eden, recapitulating the dialectic of lack and fulfilment. Gethsemane, the garden of suffering, opens the way to Paradise.

What is most striking about Pusey's use of Analogy is his departure from normal Tractarian use thereof. Pusey's extends his use of Analogy to the poor. I have noted already that St. Saviour's was a model in many ways for nineteenth-century "slum" ministry. For Pusey, however, if his sermons are concerned with preaching the Gospel to the poor in a Church built for the poor (as he notes in his Preface), it is *ultimately* the poor who stand as the greatest religious teachers (*Sermons* i, vi). Pusey extends to the poor the prophetic character of nature and of Scripture, and they become, in a sense, living words of God:

But love of God cannot co-exist with self-love, or want of love to man. And therefore true penitents have ever sought ... to shew love to Christ's poor, in order in them to shew love to Him. We cannot now wash His Feet, nor wipe them with our hair, nor anoint them, but He, when He withdrew His bodily Presence, left us those in whom to minister to Himself. 'The poor ye have always with you.' (*Sermons* 17)

If there are uncomfortable notes of paternalism in Pusey's approach to the poor, it is important to note their subversion. On the one hand, within the economy of Pusey's vision of the world, poverty may have material particularity in the poor,

but every soul is impoverished. To serve the poor, for Pusey, is in a sense to recognize externally the condition of one's own soul. But more importantly, Pusey at times actually displaces the authority of the preached word from himself to the poor, figuring them as archetypal preachers: "... such, though the poorest and most ignorant, with no other gifts of nature, no speech, nor utterance beyond the simple confession of Christ's mercies through the Cross, becomes, by his very being, a preacher of Christ crucified" (*Sermons* 170). And he states it more emphatically elsewhere, extending to the poor the task of converting the world, and making the poor models of the Christian life (much as he represents Christ as the Pattern for our salvation):

If we would see Him in His Sacraments, we must see Him also, wherever He has declared Himself to be, especially in His poor ... Real love to Christ must issue in love to all who are Christ's, and real love to Christ's poor must issue in self-denying acts of love towards them. Casual almsgiving is not Christian charity ... *the poor, rich in faith, have been the converters of the world; and we ..., if we are wise, must seek to be like them*, to empty ourselves, at least, of our abundance; to empty ourselves, rather, of our self-conceit, our notions of station, our costliness of dress, our jewelry, our luxuries, our self-love, even as He ... emptied Himself of the glory which He had with the Father, the Brightness of His Majesty, the worship of the Hosts of Heaven, and made Himself poor, to make us rich. (*Advent* 58-9; my emphasis)

For Pusey, the poor are Sacraments who en-flesh the words of God. Like the Sacraments, God has "declared Himself" to be in them. The sermon strives after identification with the word of God, and is both successful (inasmuch as it allows others to participate in the hidden mysteries of God) and a failure (it must always acknowledge its limitations). The poor, on the other hand, are perfect embodiments of the Word. They are God's own utterances (his declarations, as it were).

Having examined Pusey's *Sermons on Solemn Subjects* and situated them in relation to both the homiletic theory discussed in chapter two and the aesthetic theory of chapter one, it is useful to conclude these thoughts with a return to the initial claim of this thesis concerning the intent of the Oxford Movement. The Oxford Movement was primarily a Movement of devotion which attempted to restore to the Church of England a forgotten, or languishing, tradition of sacramental and devotional theology. The first and last concern of the Tractarians, and particularly of Pusey, was with the health and sanctity of individual souls, and by extension, of the Church. The final reflection on Pusey's sermons must emphasize this aspect of his ministry. Pusey wrote extensively and with great perspicacity on the possible re-union of Christendom.¹⁴ It is striking to note how the theological acumen of these treatises is re-placed in the sermons with a sense of patient waiting-on-God. The theological rigour by which he analyzes the claims of the Roman Catholic Church over against those of the Anglican gives way to a deep and abiding sense that prayer and obedience are the only solutions to the rents in the fabric of the Church (in the same sense in which he wrote to W.F. Hook concerning Newman's departure, that it was the result of a lack of love):

Thus alone, my brethren, may we hope that in doctrine our manifold divisions will cease. They must cease; for, He has said, "God will reveal it unto thee." Not by disputing, not by teaching alone, not by learning, not by reading Holy Scripture only, shalt thou know the truth; but by gaining, through God's grace, a childlike mind; by cleansing the eye of the soul; by obedience. (*Sermons* 322)

¹⁴ Pusey felt deeply the divisions in the Church, a feeling greatly aggravated by the departure of Newman to the Roman communion. He gave much of his time to producing texts outlining the conditions of re-union between the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church, believing that union between the two Catholic bodies of the Western Church would facilitate re-union with the Eastern Orthodox Church.

And herein we find Pusey's final comments in the sermons on language. Language can be properly and improperly employed. To use it properly is to exercise it in works of devotion, such that language is always, as it were, attentive to the very mysteries of God it contains and reveals. This is to speak prayerfully. To use language improperly is to employ it to further dispute and rivalry. The first way is marked by the prints of the Cross. It is at times a patient suffering, a willingness to await clarification and to abide misunderstanding – ultimately, it is contentment with God's "reserved" means of communicating himself to the world. The latter is marked by self-will (Pusey, *Sermons* 322). The former, à la Stanley Fish, embraces the disconfirmation of dialectical experiences that lead to conversion; the latter, the self-validation of rhetorical experiences. And it is the former disposition to language that allows one, according to Pusey, to read in it the mysteries of God. With the former disposition language becomes a Sacrament *in* which we participate. The multiple divisions that arise with discursive reasoning and arguing give way to a vision, in which all points find their proper interpretation, source and meaning:

Words have a different meaning, when tossed to and fro in argument, and when prayed in the Communion of Saints, the voice of the one Dove, moaning to its Lord. The full heart, then, stints not the meaning of the words; thinks not how little they *may* say, but how much; a ray of light falls upon them from above; we stand not without them, as judges, but within them as worshippers; He Who has taught the Church her prayers is present in our souls; and with His 'Blessed Unction from above, Comfort, Life, and Fire of love,' anoints both them and us. Disputing divides, devotion knits in one; for in it we pray to One, through One, by One. (Pusey, *Sermons* 323-24)

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Romantic discourses of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth have had an abiding influence on nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature. To confirm this one need only refer to the voluminous yearly publications that engage with their work. No less significant, though less well researched, is the importance of their thought for the discourses of nineteenth-century religion, particularly for the Oxford Movement. I have attempted to redress this imbalance in current scholarship by focusing on the importance of British Romanticism for nineteenth-century religion, particularly in the sermons of E.B. Pusey. Uniting Coleridgean and Wordsworthian themes with their study of the early Anglican Divines and the Church Fathers, the Tractarians produced a theological vision primarily concerned with the question of personal and ecclesiastical sanctity. They were indebted to nineteenth-century British Romanticism because it provided a language in which to articulate their sacramental vision of the world. For the Tractarians the entire world is a legible, if mysterious, manifestation of God's will. As they learned from Wordsworth, the natural works of God reveal his mind. And Coleridge's theory of the symbol assisted the articulation of both their sacramental theology and their theory of religious language. The ability of the symbol to mediate between the eternal and the temporal and to indicate the participation of the finite in the infinite suited the Tractarians' desire to extend to religious discourse (Scripture and sermons) the power to effectively communicate God. This was pursued in the second chapter's discussion of Tractarian homiletic theory. Following David Haney's discussion

of William Wordsworth, I have called the Tractarians' aesthetic theory an "incarnational poetics."

But as I explored at length in the second chapter, for a poetics to be properly incarnational it must acknowledge that Christ's incarnation led to his violent death. And in this tension between the word as communicative of God (symbolic signification) and as a dying word (failed symbolic signification), can be discerned a dialectic that informs the aesthetics of Coleridge, Wordsworth and Pusey. I have broadly defined this as a dialectic between lack and fulfilment. In Coleridge and Wordsworth this dialectic is manifested primarily as an anxiety over words that fail to signify properly. If words function symbolically, they are still subject to the vagaries of subjective interpretation. How can orthodox interpretations of Scripture and sermons be ensured, even given a symbolic theory of language? Wordsworth was concerned that language functioned too often as a purely representational discourse, neglecting the traces of the divine that marked it. To temper language's susceptibility to an over abundance of competing interpretations Coleridge increasingly employed theological dogma as a means of circumscribing it. But, as I demonstrated in the third chapter's reading of Pusey's sermons, the dialectic of lack and fulfilment in a properly incarnational poetics can accommodate language's seemingly incommensurable aspects (its symbolic and non-symbolic functions). The moments at which language seems farthest from the idealistic impulse that informs Coleridge's and the Tractarians' theories, is a moment of the word's death. But precisely in this death the word closely conforms to the life of Christ (his crucifixion), which is the poetic's model, and so is re-invested with profound signification. This movement from lack to fulfilment is recapitulated in Pusey's theory of the devotional life, which is a progress from

impoverishment (lack) to holiness (fulfilment). His discussion of the soul's ascent to God continually employs terms such as thirst and satisfaction, hunger and repletion.

Arguably the most important of the Oxford Fathers, Pusey has been consistently overlooked in studies of Tractarian aesthetics, most likely because his involved theological treatises do not readily lend themselves to aesthetic readings and because he did not engage in explicitly aesthetic writing as did the Movement's other leaders. Historians and theologians engaged with Pusey often neglect the influence of nineteenth-century aesthetics on his work (most notably his works on Typology and his sermons). Moreover, the nineteenth-century sermon, though an object of mass consumption throughout the Victorian period, has only rarely been treated as an important literary and aesthetic artifact. Available scholarship is either too brief in its analysis or inattentive to the cultural contexts of sermons. As a genre both "performed" publicly and read privately, the sermon constituted one of the primary literary experiences of the nineteenth century. It was also caught between tensions that have become increasingly important for contemporary literary theory: the relationship between orality and literacy; the ability or inability of texts to communicate interiority; the question of performativity. Focusing on Pusey's *Sermons on Solemn Subjects*, composed and delivered during a period of extreme personal and ecclesiastical upheaval, I have contributed to the body of scholarship that deals with the aesthetics of pulpit oratory in the Victorian age, and have redressed the absence of detailed study of Pusey's homiletics.

This reading of one course of nineteenth-century sermons by E.B. Pusey has articulated the sermons' aesthetic heritage and influence in an attempt to show the

coinherence of theological and aesthetic concerns for both the Romanticism of Wordsworth and Coleridge and the theological vision of the Oxford Movement. Both were concerned with tracing the word of God in the world and with delineating the possibilities and impossibilities of language attesting to God's hidden mysteries. And both affirmed the priority of God in the formation of individual consciousness. They would have concurred with the sentiments of the Anglican priest and poet George Herbert in the poem "The Flower" which articulates the desire to locate God's word in his manifold works: "Thy word is all, if we could spell" (l. 21).

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