Looking back at the end of the century, Hunt marked the origin of the Brotherhood in a conversation of 1846 with Millais in which he shared his own intense excitement on reading the second volume of *Modern Painters*: “Lately I had great delight in skimming over a certain book, *Modern Painters*, by a writer calling himself an Oxford Graduate; it was lent to me only for a few hours, but, by Jove! passages in it made my heart thrill” (Hunt, 1:90). Hunt’s sensibility focused on Ruskin’s discussion of “Imagination Penetrative,” and particularly on Ruskin’s typological reading of Tintoretto’s *Annunciation*: “The Annunciation takes place in a ruined house, with walls tumbled down; the place in that condition stands as a symbol of the Jewish Church—so the author reads—and it suggests an appropriateness in Joseph’s occupation of a carpenter, that at first one did not recognise; he is the new builder!” (Hunt, 1:90). During his Brotherhood phase, Rossetti shared this enthusiasm for Ruskin’s historicist theory of scriptural painting. As late as 1856, he writes to Browning praising the anti-Raphaelite arguments in the latest volume of *Modern Painters*: “I’m about half-way through Ruskin’s third volume which you describe very truly. Glorious it is in many parts—how fine that passage in the ‘Religious false ideal,’ where he describes Raphael’s *Charge to Peter*, and the probable truth of the event in its outward aspect. A glorious picture might be done from Ruskin’s description” (Letters, 1:286).  

For Hunt, Rossetti, and Millais, then, the primary issues in the formation of the Brotherhood were not only the achievement of a more accurate representationalism in opposition to Academic conventions but the revitalization of religious art through methods appropriate to their own age. Hunt recalls confessing to Millais in this 1846 conversation: “You feel that the men [the Venetian painters] who did them had been appointed by God, like old prophets, to bear a sacred message, and that they delivered themselves like Elijah of old” (Hunt, 1:90). In their theory, if not always in their practice, the Brothers too sought to “bear a sacred message.” From the essays in their single public manifesto, *The Germ*, and scattered statements of the circle during the Brotherhood period there emerges a coherent, self-

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conscious position that calls for the continuation of the pure
tradition of sacramental Christian art through the distinctly con-
temporary mode of figuralism articulated by Carlyle and Ruskin.
Within this context, the paradoxes that puzzle the modern
mind—the joining of minute realism with sacramental intention,
of archaeological accuracy with faith in Scripture as revelation,
of revivalist purpose with nineteenth-century style—are recon-
ciled through the intellectual models used by Carlyle and Rus-
kin: the analogy of the artist to the religious scientist and a figural
approach to history. And yet, ironically, this effort to restore at
the midpoint of the nineteenth century what they saw as the
single authentic tradition of sacred art brought the Brothers, for a
time, into a stance of opposition toward their audience and a
distinctly modern relationship to artistic tradition.

To the formation of their aesthetic, the Brothers brought sen-
sibilities shaped by varying modes of figuralism. Hunt, the most
authentically religious of the group, came from a firmly Protes-
tant, deeply puritanical background. Like Carlyle and Ruskin,
Hunt grew up in a family in which Bible-reading was a major
family occupation. In the most recent biography, his grand-
daughter says, "At the age of five, his favorite day of the week
was Sunday. . . . Like all their neighbours, the Hunts put on
their best clothes and went to church. After the evening meal
and family prayers, his father read aloud from the New
Testament." Hunt himself remained self-consciously proud of
his Calvinist heritage, noting in his autobiography that "our
earliest recorded ancestor had taken part against King Charles
and at the Restoration had sought service in the Protestant cause
on the Continent" (Hunt, 1:3). Having rebelled against his father
in following an artistic rather than commercial career, Hunt
justified his work as a form of ministry engaged in painting
visual sermons based upon Scripture, contemporary life, or
imaginative literature. Always, he thought of himself as working
in the tradition of English Protestant art. He notes with pride and
a hint of prefiguration, "I was christened at the church of St.
Giles, Cripplegate, in which Cromwell was married, and where
the toil-worn body of Milton lies" (Hunt, 1:4).

Dante Gabriel Rossetti was neither English nor Protestant, yet
the mental habits he brought from his own background drew
him, for a time, toward figural methods. As a young man,
Rossetti attended with his family churches known for their Trac-
tarian leanings; and in the late 1840s and into the early 1850s, he
seems to have been caught up in the resurgence of religious
feeling brought about by the Oxford Movement. But for Ros-
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setti, the figural tradition was mediated primarily through Dante, particularly through the *Vita Nuova*. Auerbach’s comments on the *Vita* in his essay “Figura” exactly describe the young Rosetti’s sense of this work:

For Dante the literal meaning or historical reality of a figure stands in no contradiction to its profounder meanings, but precisely figures it; the historical reality is not annulled, but confirmed and fulfilled by the deeper meaning. The Beatrice of the *Vita Nuova* is an earthly person; she really appeared to Dante, she really saluted him, really withheld her salutation later on. It should also be borne in mind that from the first day of her appearance the earthly Beatrice was for Dante a miracle sent from Heaven, an incarnation of Divine truth.  

It is this same sense of the interpenetration of sacred and historical reality that not only informs Rossetti’s Brotherhood illustrations of the *Vita* but also shapes his biblical paintings and treatments of contemporary events. And yet, the close connection of figural methods with erotic feelings in Dante’s *Vita* was also absorbed by Rossetti, leading him, even within his Brotherhood work, toward the use of Dantean material as a vehicle for private emotions.

Millais brought to the Brotherhood little feeling for the sacred. His father was a person of inherited wealth and no occupation; the description of him as “a man of no ambition save where his children were concerned, and who desired nothing more than the life he led as a quiet country gentleman” prefigures elements in his son’s career. With no firm religious or intellectual background to draw upon, Millais did not shape the Brotherhood aesthetic, but rather joined the group out of youthful enthusiasm and carried out its aims with his almost preternatural technical skill. But painting was always to Millais less a calling than the career track leading to the prosperous life of a country gentleman, and he left the Brotherhood as easily as he originally joined.

For all their varied backgrounds, during the Brotherhood years the members of the group thought of themselves as, and acted as, artist-scientists. In the major theoretical essay in *The Germ*, “The Purpose and Tendency of Early Italian Art,” F. G. Stephens, one of the original Brothers, quite explicitly identifies the mission of the Brotherhood with that of contemporary science: “The sciences have become almost exact within the present century. Geology and chemistry are almost re-instituted. The first has been nearly created; the second expanded so widely that it now searches and measures the creation. And how has
this been done but by bringing greater knowledge to bear upon a wider range of experiment; by being precise in the search after truth? If this adherence to fact, to experiment and not theory . . . has added so much to the knowledge of man in science; why may it not greatly assist the moral purposes of the Arts?” (Germ, 61). In working to reproduce the particular object set before him, whether a beech post in the studio, a hedge in Knole Park, or the musculature of a carpenter’s arms, the Brotherhood artist is emulating the scientist’s “adherence to fact,” to the visible truth of the particular specimen before him. In moving from the studio to work en plein air, in the obsessive search for the perfect wall or riverbank, he is following the scientist’s “adherence . . . to experiment,” to the observation of natural phenomena in situ. And in reporting on canvas the results of his direct observation, the Brotherhood artist is demonstrating a scientist’s “adherence . . . to experiment and not theory”; he is testing the authority of Academic conventions against observed fact much as the scientist tests received theory against experimental observation.

It even appears that the Brotherhood in their practice consciously drew upon the scientific theory of their time. In his Memoir of Hunt, Stephens describes Hunt’s purposes in representing light and shadow in The Hireling Shepherd (R.A., 1852) (plate 18) as the “scientific elucidation of that particular effect which, having been hinted at by Leonardo da Vinci . . . was partly explained by Newton, and fully developed by Davy and Brewster. He was absolutely the first figure-painter who gave the true colour to sun-shadows, made them partake of the tone of the object on which they were cast, and deepened such shadows to pure blue where he found them to be so” (Stephens, Hunt, 20). Although Stephens’s comment does provide a “rather muddled assessment” of the origins of Hunt’s style, the remark does indicate how much the Brothers saw their own technical innovations, in this case the use of colored shadows, as participating in the scientific progress of their own age.

This effort to see the world directly by shedding the visual preconceptions of the past also led the Brothers to emulate the style of the scientist as artist, in particular that of the scientist, like Philip Gosse, who illustrated his own texts (plate 1). As the testimony of Edmund Gosse suggests, the Brotherhood style closely approaches that of scientific illustration. The hard-edge manner and full modeling emphasizes the separateness of the physical object, its importance as a specimen. The minute particularity and the pushing of the object to the front of the picture plane as well as the rejection of chiaroscuro for a bright overall
illumination indicates the necessity of observing and recording each detail of each specimen. Again, we may note the shock of recognition of Philip Gosse and his son in finding "the exact, minute and hard execution of Mr. Hunt to be in sympathy with the method we ourselves were in the habit of using when we painted butterflies and seaweeds."  

This identification with the scientist also provided a moral justification for their minute realism. The Brothers shared Stephens's assumption that if "adherence to fact, to experiment and not theory ... has added so much to the knowledge of man in science," the same scientific modes would inevitably "greatly assist the moral purposes of the Arts" (Germ, 61, italics added). Using a Ruskinian vocabulary that fuses mimetic and moral criteria, Stephens speaks of the new school of English artists as "producing pure transcripts and faithful studies from nature" (Germ, 58). He urges artists to "believe that there is that in the fact of truth, though it be only in the character of a single leaf earnestly studied, which may do its share in the great labor of the world" (Germ, 64). His language assumes an inherent significance that will emerge from the accurate transcript of the natural world and of human events as surely as from the fact itself. He praises "the power of representing an object, that its entire intention may be visible, its lesson felt" (Germ, 60). And he exhorts the reader, "Never forget that there is in the wide river of nature something which everybody who has a rod and line may catch, precious things which every one may dive for" (Germ, 60).

In his two Germ essays on "The Subject in Art," John Tupper also assumes the moral value of the scientific method in arguing for the Brotherhood belief in an art of high moral dignity derived from close observation of modern life. For Tupper, the science that the artist must follow is that of natural theology: "Science here does not make; it unmakes, wonderingly to find the making of what God has made. . . . But though science is not to make the artist, there is no reason in nature that the artist reject it" (Germ, 13). The artist, then, like the religious scientist, must find God through accurate representation of the world about him, rather than in rehearsing artistic traditions passed down by the Academy: "Thus then we see, that the antique, however successfully it may have wrought, is not our model; for, according to that faith demanded at setting out, fine art delights us from its being the semblance of what in nature delights" (Germ, 14). Faithfully imitated on canvas, the visible world will create the same response as the divinely created natural fact itself: "Works
of Fine Art affect the beholder in the same ratio as the natural prototypes of those works would affect him” (Germ, 118).

In their scattered statements about their own work, the major Brotherhood artists also connect the close observation of natural fact with religious purpose. In his sonnet “St. Luke the Painter,” written in 1849, Rossetti writes of early-Renaissance art as knowing

How sky-breadth and field-silence and this day
Are symbols also in some deeper way,
She looked through these to God and was God’s priest.

Characteristically, Hunt uses a Ruskinian vocabulary: “Our object was to be enslaved by none, but in the field of Nature and under the sky of Heaven frankly to picture her healthful beauty and strength” (Hunt, 2:452). Both “field” and “sky” are modified by a capitalized possessive to show the visible fact as the creation of, and sign of, a transcendent power. And “beauty” is modified by “healthful” to emphasize the Ruskinian principle that the accurate representation of the visible landscape is not merely an aesthetic occupation but a means of restoring moral vigor.

The belief that each detail of nature figures the transcendent appears to be the message of Convent Thoughts (R.A., 1851), by Charles Collins, a young artist who, while executing this work, was part of the Brotherhood circle. Here, the nun lays aside the Book of God, an illustrated missal, to read from the Book of Nature, to examine closely a daisy plucked from the convent garden. In her chaste holiness, figured by the lily, able to find God not only through His revealed word but also through Wordsworthian observation of a common flower, the nun represents the integrated sensibility toward which the Pre-Raphaelite artist aspired. The very style of the painting, its detailed realism, becomes significant, then, in illustrating the mode of perception symbolized by the nun. To Ruskin, this naturalistic accuracy was the chief virtue of the work. In one of the letters to the Times of 1851, he praises the painting as a scientific illustration: “As a mere botanical study of the water lily and Alisma, as well as of the common lily and several other garden flowers, this picture would be invaluable to me” (12:321). But, using the religiously resonant vocabulary of Modern Painters, he also notes that the scientific style in which the specimens are “so well drawn” shows that these artists do not “sacrifice truth as well as feeling to eccentricity” (12:321).
This equation of detailed realism and sacred purpose is also implicit in the group's choice of a name. Drawing upon new models of art history popularized in the 1840s by such writers as Mrs. Jameson, Lord Lindsay,9 and, of course, Ruskin, the Brotherhood sees the pre-Raphaelite artists, those representational painters that have moved beyond medieval style and yet precede Raphael—"Gozzoli . . . Ghiberti . . . Fra Angelico . . . Masaccio . . . Ghirlandajo . . . Orcagna . . . Giotto" (Germ, 61–62)—as the last to have confronted the visible world directly, to have perceived it clearly, to have represented it exactly. For, just as the true scientist confronts the natural world openly, freed from the distorting effect of false theories passed down on the authority of tradition, so, according to the Brotherhood, the early Italian artist perceived nature with a similar directness by not having imposed between the eye and the visible fact the distorting artistic conventions created by Raphael, imposed by his followers, and fossilized into the theory and educational practice of the Royal Academy. Stephens, in "The Purpose and Tendency of Early Italian Art," lauds these early-Renaissance artists for their "success, by following natural principles, until the introduction of false and meretricious ornament led the Arts from the simple chastity of nature, which it is as useless to attempt to elevate as to endeavour to match the works of God by those of man" (Germ, 62).

To the Brotherhood, as to Ruskin, the clarity of mimesis in the artists immediately preceding Raphael is a sign of religious strength. The work of these artists represents to the Brotherhood what the facade of Saint Mark's does to Ruskin, the manifestation of the integrated faculty in which visual acuteness and religious awareness are fused. Within this model of art history, then, the work of Raphael, praised by the Academy as the highest achievement of Western art becomes, instead, the point of decline. For the Brotherhood, as for Ruskin in Modern Painters II and The Stones of Venice, the failure of mimetic accuracy in the Grand Style, particularly its non-historicist idealization, demonstrates the secularization of the artistic consciousness. Stephens praises Masaccio as differing from a High Renaissance artist in manifesting the visual awareness that comes from a sense of the natural world as the creation of God: "For as the knowledge is stronger and more pure in Masaccio than in the Caracci, and the faith higher and greater,—so the first represents nature with more true feeling and love, and with a deeper insight into her tenderness; he follows her more humbly, and has produced to us more of her simplicity; we feel his appeal to
be more earnest" (Germ, 60). For Stephens, "the introduction of false and meretricious ornament" by Raphael "led the Arts from the simple chastity of nature" (Germ, 62). In John Orchard's "Dialogue" in The Germ, Christian says, "Nature itself is comparatively pure; all that we desire is the removal of the fictitious matter that the vice of fashion, evil hearts, and infamous desires graft upon it" (Germ, 151).

It is this historical scheme that Rossetti allegorizes in "St. Luke the Painter." In this poem, the early Italian painters alone are able to be simultaneously representational and devotional by painting "sky-breadth and field-silence" as "symbols." The early Renaissance, then, becomes the apogee of Western art. In the High Renaissance, "past noon," when the artist rejects the service of a religious art, when "her toil began to irk," he inevitably turns from the direct observation of the natural world to the mere reiteration of humanly created artistic formulas. In Rossetti's terms, the Raphaelite artist "sought talismans, and turned in vain / To soulless self-reflections of man's skill."

If the Brotherhood saw sacred meaning as emerging from the accurate representation of natural fact, the artists looked for the same divine significance to emerge from the equally scientific recording of historical fact. In their extensive treatment of both biblical and postbiblical history, the Brothers sought not to revive the style of the painters preceding Raphael but to achieve a sacred art through the historical methods they saw as characterizing the spirit of their own age. In his essay "On the Mechanism of a Historical Picture" in The Germ, Ford Madox Brown outlines the methods of achieving archeological accuracy carried out by the group: "The first care of the painter, after having selected his subject, should be to make himself thoroughly acquainted with the character of the times, and habits of the people, which he is about to represent; and next, to consult the proper authorities for his costume, and such objects as may fill his canvas; as the architecture, furniture, vegetation or landscape, or accessories, necessary to the elucidation of the subject" (Germ, 70). The puzzling association of this distinctly nineteenth-century historicism with the early-Italian painters derives from the Ruskinian model of art history. To the Brothers, the chief failure of the Raphaelite manner is that the idealizing style, exemplified in Raphael's cartoons for the Vatican tapestries, appears to repudiate the historicity of scriptural events. To the Brotherhood, it seemed that only the artists immediately preceding Raphael, those painting in a realistic manner, but as yet uncorrupted by the heroicizing conventions of the Grand
Style, could still feel the quotidian reality of biblical events while still realizing their sacred meaning. In his essay on early-Italian art, Stephens illustrates how these "earlier painters came nearer to fact," how they "were less of the art, artificial" (Germ, 60), through the example of a Florentine Pietà. His main point is that the work achieves its religious power through historical accuracy. In this Pietà, the Virgin "is old, (a most touching point); lamenting aloud, clutches passionately the heavy-weighted body on her knee; her mouth is open." Stephens notes that this realism, "this identification with humanity," is far superior to any Raphaelite idealization, to any "refined or emasculate treatment of the same subject by later artists, in which we have the fact forgotten for the sake of the type of religion, which the Virgin was always taken to represent, whence she is shown as still young" (Germ, 60).

Although it is difficult to share the Brotherhood's excitement over Carlo Lasinio's engravings from the Campo Santo, the group appreciated these fourteenth- and fifteenth-century works as representing the power of a historical, as opposed to Raphaelite, treatment of scriptural subjects. The subjects themselves are clearly typological. The Departure of Hagar from the House of Abraham is mentioned by Saint Paul as prefiguring the replacement of the Old Covenant by the New (Gal. 4:22-31); The Sacrifice of Isaac is a type of the Sacrifice of Christ. Although these works do not show the nineteenth-century archeological accuracy that the Brotherhood sought, they do give the sense of random daily reality by showing the central action as occurring within domestic, rather than generalized, heroic settings. In The Sacrifice of Isaac, as Abraham prepares for his journey, two young boys playfully fight and the servant readies the mule. After the intervention by the angel, Abraham and Isaac eat together attended by their servants, while the mule grazes peacefully nearby. Nor were the Brothers the only Victorians to be impressed by the figural quality of these works. In a letter to his father from Pisa in 1845, Ruskin writes with enormous enthusiasm of the power of these frescoes, particularly of The Departure of Hagar, in impressing upon the viewer the historical reality of scriptural events:

The Campo Santo is the thing. I never believed the patriarchal history before, but I do now, for I have seen it. . . . In spite of every violation of the common, confounded, rules of art, of anachronisms & fancies . . . it is Abraham himself still. Abraham & Adam, & Cain, Rachel & Rebeka, all are there, the very people, real, visible, created, substantial, such as they were, as they must have been—one cannot look at them without being certain
that they have lived. . . . Abraham sits close to you entertaining the angels—you may touch him & them—and there is a woman behind bringing the angels some real, positive pears.  

Hoping, like Carlyle and Ruskin, to find spiritual as well as artistic regeneration through historicism, the Brotherhood sought to re-create in the present the moralized imagination represented by the early-Italian artists. The very drive to create a close, fraternal group with the religiously resonant name of "Brotherhood," the paraphernalia of rules, the regular meetings, and the secrecy transcend their evident juvenility as attempts to re-create a communal consciousness in their own lives that would inevitably be expressed in their art. Although the Brothers knew, primarily through Ford Madox Brown, of the methods and the living habits of the Nazarenes, they were too Protestant, too imbued with the Victorian idea of historical development, perhaps simply too young and sexually vigorous, to don the monk's robe of the pre-Renaissance artist. In his essay on early-Italian art, Stephens takes direct issue with the Nazarene attempt to duplicate the life of the medieval artist: "The modern artist does not retire to monasteries, or practise a discipline; but he may show his participation in the same high feeling by a firm attachment to truth in every point of representation" (Germ, 59).

Stephens thus articulates the paradox at the center of the Brotherhood enterprise—that the artist can express the "high feeling" or religious imagination of the past through the use of artistic modes characteristic of the present, in particular through a "firm" scientific and historicist "attachment to truth . . . of representation." The aim of the Brotherhood, then, was not to mimic the style of fifteenth-century art but to employ the perceptual and artistic modes of the present to restore the integrated sensibility that, looking through Ruskin's eyes, they saw exemplified in the past.

Ironically, the Brotherhood effort to restore a public religious art set them, for a time, in a role defined by opposition. The choice of a name, the formation of a society as an alternative to the Royal Academy, the issuing of The Germ as a manifesto, the un-Academic use of brilliant color, hard-edge outline, and random composition clearly indicate the Brothers' rejection of the one institution through which one could, in mid-Victorian England, hope to become a successful artist. And yet, in opposing the Academy, the Brothers did not see themselves in the avant-garde model of breaking entirely with artistic tradition in order to create an art that is entirely new. Instead, they speak only of
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rejecting the false tradition codified by the Academy in order to restore the authentic tradition cut off by the High Renaissance. This justification of innovation as the continuation of the true tradition found far back in history links the Brotherhood with movements of the later-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. William Morris, while creating highly Victorian designs, saw himself as restoring the pure tradition of English folk art destroyed by the introduction of foreign styles and the division of labor in the High Renaissance. Early in his career, Yeats looked beyond late-nineteenth-century aestheticism to the disappearing traditions of Celtic Ireland. And T. S. Eliot, the most influential modern writer on the uses of tradition, postulates the theory of a dissociation of sensibility in the seventeenth century remarkably similar to the idea of a dissociation of visual and moral awareness in the Renaissance that informs the historical model of Ruskin and the Brotherhood. For the Brotherhood, as for these later writers, the appeal to the single authentic tradition expresses their sense of a complex relation to history. It is true, but only partly true, that the Brotherhood invocation of the early-Italian painters is a means of finding what Renato Poggioli calls "patents of nobility" for innovations in the present. 13 It is equally true that their name indicates their own perception that for all their originality of style and participation in the scientific and historicist impulses of their own age, there is a genuine continuity between their work and an earlier sacramental art.

1. Rossetti refers to chap. 4, "Of the False Ideal:—First, Religious," Modern Painters III.
4. Auerbach, pp. 73-74.
6. The discussion of the Brotherhood as antiscientific in such works as John Dixon Hunt, The Pre-Raphaelite Imagination, 1848-1900 (London: Routledge, 1968) fails to consider the religious basis of the scientific ideas upon which the Brotherhood drew.

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13. Ibid., p. 70.