“From House to Home”:
The Structure of a Soul Journey in Christina Rossetti’s Devotional Writing

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Lara Dawn Stoudt, candidate for the degree of Master of Arts in English, has presented a thesis titled, ‘From House to Home: The Structure of a Soul Journey in Christina Rossetti's Devotional Writing,' in an oral examination held on November 30, 2016. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

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Abstract

This thesis examines how Christina Rossetti uses a specific narrative structure I term the soul journey, to help her readers navigate the chaos of an ever-changing social and religious culture of Victorian England. Foundational to my analysis of her writing is the literary influence of Dante Alighieri, John Bunyan, and Alfred Lord Tennyson; specifically how their writing demonstrates the spiral structure of the soul journey. Also vital to this study is Rossetti’s devotion to Anglo-Catholic liturgical practices deriving from the Oxford Movement of the 1830s and 1840s in England. The leaders of the Oxford Movement, or Tractarians, sought reform of the Church of England. As part of their mandate for reform, they called for a renewed emphasis on the Sacraments, including the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Rossetti, who regularly attended Christ Church, a parish at the centre of the Oxford Movement, was exposed early in her life to the teachings of the Tractarians; thus, her own writing shares elements of Tractarian thought. This thesis will establish that patterns of worship in the Anglo-Catholic liturgy, including the Communion service and liturgical calendar, mirror the spiral structure of the soul journey. First, this narrative structure is used to examine overall patterns in Rossetti’s devotional writing and then applied to the narrative poem, “From House to Home.” Second, the soul journey structure is used to explore the themes of hope and hospitality in Rossetti’s writing. Details of Anglo-Catholic liturgy, with a focus on the sacrament of the Eucharist and Rossetti’s own devotional practices, will be applied to a close reading of “Goblin Market” and “A Better Resurrection.” I conclude with an in-depth study of Rossetti’s devotional prose work *Time Flies* and I reveal how Rossetti reworks the repetitive and mechanized conventions of industrial time to navigate the soul journey through liturgical time as preparation for the afterlife.
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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis and the journey to get here to my friend and mentor, Gloria Daum, who has weaved into my life God’s wisdom and love. Also, to my friends and family who have soul-journeyed with me through all the spirals down and spirals up.

To my husband, Jason, thank you for your love, friendship, and support. And to my sons, William, Benjamin, and Josiah, every word is for you because you give my life true purpose and bring true joy to my heart.
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Christina Georgina Rossetti, born December 5, 1830, began her life in London, England during a crucial transitional decade in British history, a decade marked by social and political reform, initially through the First Reform Bill of 1832¹ and the abolition of slavery in 1833, and, at its close, by the coronation of a new, young monarch, Queen Victoria, who was just eighteen when she was crowned in 1837.² During Queen Victoria’s 63 year reign, Victorians would experience full immersion into the industrial age, driven by the steam engine, which would infiltrate most facets of industry and transportation and help “transform an entire economy and way of life” (Black et al. LXV).³ Victorian culture would also see a transition into a new “mass visual culture” (LXI), which was manifested in several popular cultural developments including “public amusements, popular shows, traveling exhibitions, circuses, sporting events, holiday resorts, and public gardens” (LXII) and new technologies such as the cinema, the daguerreotype, and the photograph. The popularity of this new visual culture was

¹ This was the first of three Reform Bills in the nineteenth century which sought to expand male suffrage in England.
² Queen Victoria would reign for 63 years until her death in 1901. The literary period known as the Victorian period is aptly named for Queen Victoria’s reign. Literary historians often see the 1830s as the end of the Romantic era and the beginning of a new literary period, the Victorian Age; therefore, the early works of this burgeoning new age both reflected and rejected their literary predecessors, the Romantics, including William Wordsworth, Samuel Coleridge, William Blake, Lord Byron, and John Keats. See Richard D. Altick’s book Victorian People and Ideas for a larger discussion on the transitional 1830s, particularly his chapter “Romantic Heritage and Regency Twilight.”
³ Black et al. note that the steam engine was a “symbol of power both on land and sea. . . Steam engines were adapted for use in the production of coal, textiles, heavy metals, and printing presses, thus becoming indispensable to Britain’s industrial growth [and] steamships powered the British Empire, with several major shipping lines. . . [Also,] steam locomotives epitomized the coming of the Victorian era” (LXV-LXVI).
propelled by a rising middle class that had more disposable income to enjoy leisure and recreational activities. The Great Exhibition of 1851 would come to epitomize this shift in Victorian culture. Rossetti would also witness and contribute to the expansion of print culture, which included a rise in popularity of prose and non-fiction works and also an increase in the number of periodicals. Although mass print culture would be dominated by male voices, women writers, like Rossetti, found an outlet and an audience for their own unique Victorian voices.

In the years that followed, the Church of England faced its own calls for reform, responding, in part, to challenges to scripture as an authority for scientific thought. In particular, scientific texts like Charles Lyell’s *Principles of Geology* (1830-33), and a few decades later, Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) called into question the age of the earth and the origins of humankind as told in Genesis. There were also opposing religious viewpoints within the church itself, including, but not limited to, the Oxford Movement (the High Church), the Evangelicals (the Low Church), and the Broad Church or Latitudinarian Church. At the beginning of

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4 The Great Exhibition of 1851 was “the first world’s fair, [and] officially called the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations but familiarly known then and ever since as the Crystal Palace” (Altick 11). The exhibitors were “housed in the first prefabricated public housing in history, a vast construction of iron and glass set in London’s Hyde Park” (11). The exhibition featured displays from Britain and other nations, which “reflected the success of Britain’s new free-trade policy” (11).

5 Popular periodicals, such as the *Edinburgh Review, Blackwood’s Magazine*, the *Quarterly Review, Fraser’s Magazine*, and the *Athenaeum* brought to the public attention “the day’s key issues, [including] the latest scientific developments to religious controversies, . . . aesthetic developments, [and] social values and mores” (Black et. al LXXVIII).

6 To clarify, Altick says, “In the Victorian period ‘Latitudinarian’ was used synonymously with ‘Broad Church,’ and in most people’s usage the more general word ‘liberal,’ in a religious context, meant ‘Broad Church’ also” (207). According to Altick, the Broad Church “constituted a kind of rudimentary ecumenical movement, seeking to bring various Christian denominations together on common grounds of belief” (207). The Evangelicals or Low Church included a number of Protestant denominations, including Methodists, Presbyterians, The Salvation Army, Baptists, and the Plymouth Brethren. In general, the Evangelicals stressed the “importance of an individual’s
the Victorian period, despite the dissenting voices of the Evangelicals, the established Anglican church (mostly Latitudinarians) maintained political control. As Altick notes, the “bishops, nearly all of whom were connected with the aristocracy by blood, marriage, or patronage . . . functioned mainly as a powerful bloc in the House of Lords . . . they supported Tory polices down the line” (204). Although the established church would maintain “a powerful entity throughout the Victorian era” (Black et al. LVI), “internal corruption” and the failure to serve a changing society (204) would slowly erode the Church of England’s influence on the general public. 

Rossetti’s family was also known for its own complications and contradictory viewpoints. Christina’s father, Gabriele, was an Italian immigrant who came to London in 1824 after fleeing Italy as a “hunted revolutionary” (Weintraub 1). Gabriele was a Dante scholar and Italian teacher. He married Christina’s mother, Frances, the daughter of Gaetano Polidori (another Italian teacher) and Frances Pierce (an Anglo-Saxon governess). The Rossetti children (Maria, Christina, Dante, and William) inherited a rich literary and scholarly education from their father Gabriele and grandfather, Gaetano Polidori. Frances Rossetti provided the religious education for her children and they were regularly taken to church. Christ Church on Albany Street, a predominant church in relationship with God, of prudence and temperance, of conversion, of missionary work, and of humanitarian activism” (Black et. al LVI). The High Church or the Oxford Movement, formed, in part, as a “reaction to the Evangelical movement, led by Oxford theologians John Henry Newman, John Keble, and Edward Pusey” (Black et. al LVII). Proponents of the Oxford Movement, “celebrated aesthetic elements of worship, [and] advocated an increased emphasis on religious ritual and a strict observance of clerical hierarchy within the Anglican communion” (LVII). Newman would later convert to the Catholic faith in 1845, which “spelled the end of the Oxford Movement [and ushered ] in a significant Catholic revival” (LVII).

7 As an example of this internal corruption, Altick asserts that the “bishops and archbishops lived in almost regal splendor, [while the] ordinary clergymen were on the edge of starvation” (206).

8 Also contributing to the instability in the established church was the “working-class attack” or “anti-clericalism,” which helped fuel the French Revolution (Altick 205).
the Oxford Movement, was Rossetti’s home church from 1843-1876\(^9\) and from 1876 to her death in 1894, she attended another Christ Church (Woburn Square) near her home on Torrington Place. Christina and Maria would uphold their mother’s religious devotion. Dante and William, more “dutiful than devotional” (Weintraub 5), would become critical of the church and eventually drift away from regular attendance. The religious and social tensions within the Rossetti household and in Victorian society in general, along with the variety of literary, philosophical, and scientific texts that influenced her, provided fertile ground for Rossetti’s writing.\(^10\)

Rossetti’s response to the waves of change in her social and religious environment would be to write poetry and prose that exposed the struggles and the triumphs of the spiritual journey. Rossetti’s writing is marked with the anxieties, even the sufferings, of a Victorian woman in a volatile time. Yet, even when the scriptural foundation of her church is questioned, Rossetti’s voice of faith remains resolute. Rossetti demonstrated in her own life a devotion to a public and private liturgical practice and her habits are echoed in over 50 years of religious writings.\(^11\) As my thesis

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\(^9\) As Raymond Chapman notes, the Anglo-Catholic teachings of Christ Church on Albany Street were a natural fit for Rossetti, reflecting her own family’s Anglican and Catholic background. As a “product of a mixed family, more Italian than English,” Chapman says, “[her] maternal grandmother had dealt with religious division by having her sons brought up as Roman Catholics and her daughters as Anglicans” (170).

\(^10\) Mary Arseneau notes that Christina Rossetti “read in English, Italian, German, and French: knew Italian poets better than most scholars studying her poetry today; and read the important poets, novelists, and critics of her century including Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Scott, Dickens, Carlyle, Ruskin, L.E.L. (Letitia Elizabeth Landon), Barrett Browning, Browning, Tennyson, and many more. [She also read] periodicals, including *Athenaeum, Macmillan’s Magazine*, the *Saturday Review, Blackwood’s*, and the *Edinburgh Review*. As an adult she approached Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Spenser as a scholar, spending innumerable afternoons at the British Museum. . . [She] published more than two thousand pages in a range of works whose focus was not primarily poetic or creative but rather biographical, critical, devotional, or exegetical” (“Introduction” xv).

\(^11\) One of Rossetti’s earliest recorded poems, a birthday gift for her mother, was written when she was just eleven (Marsh 33). Rossetti would write and publish up until her death on December 29, 1894.
will show, Rossetti will answer Victorian religious doubt and the industrialization of clock-time with volumes of devotional poetry and prose designed to direct her readers back to the rhythms of divine grace through an emphasis on liturgical rituals and the liturgical calendar.

The critical response to Rossetti’s devotional writing since its reception has been varied, not surprisingly given the complexity of her family, social, and religious milieu. An 1876 review of Rossetti’s poetry exclaimed: “Miss Rossetti has set up a little devotional shrine here and there throughout the volume, where we find her on her knees, with a strong faith, a deep sense of spiritual needs . . . As she sinks her poetry rises” (“Christina Rossetti’s Poems” *The Catholic World* 127). Similarly, in 1904, Ford Madox Hueffer asserted that her poetry is “a prayer, an adoration of the Saviour, a fear of the Almighty, a craving for pardon and for rest” (397). In a 1931 biography, Eleanor Walter Thomas explains that “[Rossetti] accepted the God and the doctrines of Christianity as revealed in the Bible and the *Book of Common Prayer* and interpreted by the Church of England” (192). With this in mind, Thomas suggests that Rossetti’s devotional poems and prose works were reflections of Rossetti’s “flight from the finite to the Infinite. . . her quest for God” (190). Others, however, saw Rossetti as a melancholy, repressed woman and her poetry as an expression of mental illness and suffering. Even her own brother William Michael Rossetti prefaced his anthology of her poetry by saying, “Over-scrupulosity made Christina Rossetti shut up her mind to almost all things save the Bible and the admonitions and ministrations of priests . . . Her temperament and character, naturally warm and free, become a fountain sealed” (lxviii).12 Sandra M. Gilbert and

12 Notably, William Rossetti’s view of Christina’s writing in his “Memoir” is much more nuanced than this simple statement regarding her “over-scrupulous” ways. As much as he critiqued her religious close-mindedness, he also praised her steadfast faith. And, importantly, William did not think that her religion in any way diminished her poetic talent; for instance, he says, “Impulse and élan were checked, both in act and in writing,
Susan Gubar, examples of the psycho-social feminist school of thought that still influences Rossetti criticism today, proclaim that Rossetti’s “female poet-speaker[s] must discover . . . that for the woman poet only renunciation, even anguish, can be a suitable source of song” (572). They ably highlight a particular tone and voice revealed in some of Rossetti’s poetry; nonetheless, their vision is narrow as it is based only on a few poems in Rossetti’s first volume of poetry, *Goblin Market and Other Poems* (1862). Yet, despite the myopic nature of their analysis, feminist critics, like Gilbert and Gubar, were the first to reintroduce Victorian women writers, like Rossetti, to the scholarly conversation and offer different ways to look at their writing.

The conversation that began with the early feminist critics is important because their perspective allows for a more nuanced view of how Rossetti’s religious practices impacted her writing. One particular book, Lynda Palazzo’s *Christina Rossetti’s Feminist Theology* (2002), advocates for Rossetti’s “feminist theology” that attempts to navigate the “fundamentally male religion” (2). Palazzo’s analysis of Rossetti’s narrative poem “Goblin Market” as an example of “positive female spirituality” (7) has been instrumental in my own analysis of Rossetti’s “Goblin Market.” Importantly, Palazzo, like the feminist critics before her, argues that Rossetti’s writing (in particular her early poems) clearly demonstrates her struggle with Tractarian thought on female sexuality and the female body (8). My inquiry into Rossetti’s devotional writing arises out of Palazzo’s observation of the female body’s struggle through male-dominated religious doctrine that oppressed the female body. However, my analysis will look at sexuality and

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14 One of the issues that Palazzo takes up in her analysis of Rossetti’s early poems is the Tractarian Edward Pusey’s teachings of renunciation. Palazzo argues that some of Rossetti’s poems demonstrate her own struggle against “adolescent girl’s longings, half-sexual, half-spiritual” (6) and how she directs these desires “towards martyrdom” (6).
other bodily experiences in Rossetti’s writing as not in conflict with her religious practice, but essential to the way Rossetti experienced her religion.15

Many critics have focused on Rossetti’s religious devotion. Notably, Anthony Harrison, in his 1988 book, *Christina Rossetti in Context*, is harsh with her previous critics and states that “Rossetti has suffered severely from the critical approaches of biographical scholars who have frequently read her verse to lay bare the nature of her unfulfilled passions or to discover the identity of her innominate lover” (2).16 Harrison targets specific feminist scholarship, successors to Gilbert and Gubar, that saw Rossetti either as a victim of patriarchal oppression or as a subversive woman writer, promoting feminist ideals. Diane D’Amico in *Faith, Gender, and Time* (1999) observes Rossetti’s image has changed over the last century from “[a woman] reflecting the values of a Victorian woman of faith. . . [to,] most recently, . . . a highly intelligent woman in a patriarchal society whose poetry reveals both victimization and subversive feminism” (1). D’Amico’s observation may have been true in 1999, but it appears that Rossetti criticism is coming full circle in recognizing that her work reflects the values of a nineteenth-century Anglo-Catholic faith. For instance, Dinah Roe’s 2006 book *Christina Rossetti’s Faithful Imagination* is careful in acknowledging feminist criticism for

15 Frederick S. Roden postulates a similar pattern in Rossetti’s writing in his essay “Kiss of the Soul.” He argues that given the “revival of interest in incarnational theology [and that] through the Oxford Movement in the early nineteenth century, the relationship between religion and sexuality, spirituality and gender, began to be re-examined. In glorifying the beautiful body of Christ in the Real Presence, religious discourse took on a more body-centered voice” (38). Notably, Roden asserts this body-centered religious discourse is not new at all, but echoes the “mystical heritage” (38) of the Anglican church. He notes, as one example, that in the 1840s, *Showings of Love* by Julian of Norwich, a fourteenth-century mystic, resurfaced to influence writers like Rossetti (38).

16 Harrison goes on to suggest that “readings of Christina Rossetti’s works by such critics have depended on the fallacious assumption that her poetry is written for the most part in a confessional poetic mode. . . [instead, he suggests,] her poems are exploratory, presenting notably different views—from poem to poem and even from one version of a poem to another. . . her aesthetic values often derive from extremely diverse and sometimes ostensibly incompatible literary sources” (2).
concerning to the promotion of Rossetti’s work and continued reception; however, Roe’s focus is Rossetti’s religious devotion: how her religious practices informed her writing and the role her writing played in her spirituality.¹⁷

My analysis of Rossetti’s writing reflects recent scholarship that has called for a “turn to religion” in literary criticism (LaPorte 277), following Ken Jackson and Arthur F. Marotti’s 2004 influential essay “The Turn to Religion in Early Modern English Studies.” Jackson and Marotti assert that a writer’s religion is “certainly a deep psychological and emotional experience, a core moral commitment, a personally and socially crucial way of transvaluing human experience and desire, a reality both within and beyond the phenomenal world” (169). Jackson and Marotti’s focus on Early Modern literary studies, but the same idea is essential to Victorian literary studies. Religion, to most Victorians, was formative of the way they thought about and experienced their social environment, as Altick notes in *Victorian People and Ideas*:

> The ordinary Victorian had been reared in a culture circumscribed by Christian teaching. In addition to a common literary and argumentative vocabulary, the Bible provided the accepted cosmogony, a considerable part of ancient history, as it was then known and above all the foundations of his morality. Religion had determined his whole outlook upon life. (203)


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¹⁷ For instance, Roe credits Diane D’Amico, Lynda Palazzo and Mary Arseneau for their work “in the rediscovery and rehabilitation of Rossetti’s devotional work” (2). She also calls for more work to be done to uncover the “role of her religious faith . . . specifically Rossetti’s reading of the Bible” (2). Roe speculates that the “criticism of Rossetti’s substantial body of devotional work has historically been hampered by a discomfort about treating religious writings, particularly by a middle-class, nineteenth-century, single woman, as works of literature” (3).
which focuses on the writing of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Christina Rossetti, and Adelaide Procter, agrees with Jackson and Marotti and Altick and adds that differences in religious practices influence how religious writing “takes particular shape and voice because it emerges from Christian religious imaginaries formed—deliberately but also in deeper, unconscious ways—by continual engagement in particular worship and environments” (17). In essence, these critics have all recognized that religious practices are foundational to the way a writer’s imagination is formed. Rossetti, from cradle to grave, through the decades of religious doubt and increasing secularism in Victorian England, remained a willing and faithful participant in the Anglo-Catholic faith. Her religious devotion and also the specifics of her religious practices cannot be ignored or over-simplified when analyzing her writing.

Certainly, Rossetti scholarship has begun to recognize the influence of her religious practices and other religious writers on Rossetti’s writing. For instance, many Rossetti scholars have recognized the influence of her male Oxford Movement contemporaries. Among these theologians, John Keble, who wrote the influential book *The Christian Year*, and John Neale, who reintroduced the patristic teachings in his book *Medieval Preachers and Medieval Preaching*, are said by Ludlow to have influenced Rossetti’s content and also the form of her devotional writings (Ludlow 30). Although the work of these critics has been a valuable contribution to Rossetti scholarship, few critics have yet conducted an in-depth analysis of the relationship of her devotional writing to other Christian writings. Among these few, Roe acknowledges the Pre-

\[18\] For example, Diane D’Amico, David A. Kent and P.G. Stanwood, Frederick S. Roden, Emma Mason, Esther Hu, Krista Lysack, Raymond Chapman, Mary Arseneau, Elizabeth Ludlow, Lynda Palazzo, Dinah Roe, Karen Dieleman, and Anthony Harrison.
Raphaelite\textsuperscript{19} and Romantic tensions in Rossetti’s devotional writing and also connects her writing to Dante, Petrarch, and the writings of St. Paul.\textsuperscript{20} Harrison’s scholarship on Rossetti, which also recognizes the influence of the Pre-Raphaelites,\textsuperscript{21} asserts that Rossetti’s writing includes allusions to “Dante, Petrarch, Herbert, Crashaw, Maturin, Coleridge, Keats, Tennyson. . . [as well as] Saint Augustine, Plato, and Thomas à Kempis” (\textit{Christina Rossetti in Context} 10, 88). Further, Christina Hobbs notes how recent Rossetti criticism has “begun to uncover in [her devotional] works much more than a medley of biblical exegesis, biographical anecdote, and religious poetry” (409). In fact, Hobbs notes, Rossetti would have “absorbed from Augustine, Dante, and Thomas à Kempis . . . important elements of Christian mysticism” (414).\textsuperscript{22} Further, the medieval mystics Julian of Norwich and Hildegard of Bingen play a large part in Roden’s work on Rossetti (“The Kiss of the Soul” 38). Notably, Ludlow’s 2014 book \textit{Christina Rossetti and the Bible: Waiting with the Saints} responds to what she calls the “critical gaps” in Rossetti scholarship regarding her devotional practices and publications (30). In light of these gaps, Ludlow’s focus is on “Rossetti’s intervention into Victorian literary and devotional spaces and . . . her strong awareness of different audiences” (30). Along with my inquiry into Rossetti’s religious practices, I will build on the work of these Rossetti

\textsuperscript{19} Importantly, Rossetti’s brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti was a leader of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which was founded in 1848. Rossetti published poetry in the Pre-Raphaelite periodical \textit{The Germ}.\textsuperscript{20} In her analysis of Rossetti’s devotional writings, Roe is particularly interested in the “Pauline model of submission and obedience to the divine will” (107).\textsuperscript{21} Harrison argues that Rossetti’s poetry has much in common with Pre-Raphaelite poetry because of its close attention “to the details of nature. . . its preoccupation with betrayed or disappointed love, . . . [its] use of symbolism and typology, its medievalism, its employment of dream visions, and its preoccupation with suffering and with visionary idealities as a relief from suffering” (“Rossetti’s Devotionalist Ideology” 67).\textsuperscript{22} Hobbs acknowledges that her assertion comes from “Harrison’s model” (414) of Rossetti’s influences. Both Hobbs and Harrison note that Rossetti’s knowledge of Kempis and Augustine comes from “Rossetti’s Tractarian background” (Hobbs 426).
scholars, which recognizes the trans-historical conversation from a variety of religious and literary sources in Rossetti’s writing.

As already mentioned, one of the strands of recent Rossetti criticism is to look at the influence of her Anglo-Catholic faith: “Anglo,” because it was still part of the Anglican church, but also “Catholic” because of the reforms in the Anglican church that called for a return to pre-reformation, Roman ways of worship.\(^23\) Again, the term Anglo-Catholic had its genesis in the Oxford Movement (the originators were Oxford clergymen) or Tractarianism (named after a series of reform tracts, *Tracts for the Times*, which were published between 1833 and 1841). What began as a political protest in 1833\(^24\) grew into a movement of reform and resulted in distinctive ways of liturgical worship.\(^25\) John Henry Newman, in the preface of *Tracts for the Times*, titled “Advertisement,” states that the purpose of *Tracts for the Times* was to

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\text{[contribute] something toward the practical revival of doctrines, which, although held by the great divines of our Church, at present have become obsolete with the majority of her members. . . the Sacraments, not preaching,}
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\(^23\) D’Amico and Kent in their essay “Rossetti and the Tractarians,” note that early critics of Rossetti’s writing hesitated to link her to the Tractarians “because such signs would have associated her with Roman Catholicism . . . [commentators who] wanted to claim her as a religious poet but who resisted what they perceived as Romanist influences would not have wished to note characteristics of the Oxford Movement in her work” (93-4).

\(^24\) Altick notes that the Oxford Movement’s official start date is July 1833, when “Keble preached at Oxford what came to be known as his ‘National Apostasy’ sermon. His theme was ‘Save the Church!’ . . . put a halt to Parliament’s interference in its affairs” (210). They argued that the “political deck was triply stacked against the Church . . . there was a strong bloc of Dissenters and Roman Catholics . . . the Parliament was now controlled by the Whigs . . . [who] opposed the Tories’ close and mutually profitable ties with the Church, [and behind] the Whigs stood their new allies, the Benthamites, whose hostility to organized religion in general, and to the Anglican Church, in particular, was notorious” (209).

\(^25\) For a detailed discussion of the literary influence and historical background of the Oxford Movement see Raymond Chapman’s *Faith and Revolt: Studies in the Literary Influence of the Oxford Movement*. For a literature review of the critics who have studied the Tractarians relationship to Rossetti’s writing, see D’Amico and Kent’s essay “Rossetti and the Tractarians.”
are the sources of Divine Grace; that the Apostolical ministry had a virtue in it which went out over the whole Church. . . [and] fellowship with [prayer] was a gift and privilege, as well as duty. (iii–iv)

Newman highlights three important reforms to the Anglican church as it was in 1833: a return to the Sacraments as the source of Divine grace, the importance of Apostolic succession, and the emphasis on community (fellowship) and prayer. Altick notes that the movement was “anti-liberal, [referring] both to the Broad Church’s relaxed attitude toward doctrine and to the Benthamite Whigs’ Erastianism and their determination to trim down the Church’s privileges” (211).26 Altick also argues that the Tractarians or Anglo-Catholics “asserted the Church’s authority in matters of faith, as contrasted with the Puritan-Evangelical stress on the Bible as illuminated by the inner light of the individual” (211). Therefore, followers of the Oxford Movement set themselves up in opposition to the established church and the dissenters, or Evangelicals. Just as Anglo-Catholic perspective differed from that of the Evangelicals and the Broad Church, so too Rossetti’s writing is distinct from other Anglican writing.27 Vital to my analysis of Rossetti’s devotional writing is the Anglo-Catholic emphasis on the return to the Sacraments for Divine Grace, particularly the Eucharist. Also, I will be working from Dieleman’s assertion that the specifics of Anglo-Catholic liturgy formed the foundation for Rossetti’s “religious imaginary” (112). In particular, I will be looking at how the

26 Benthamism (named after Jeremy Bentham) or Unitarianism was “a hybrid philosophy partaking equally of eighteenth-century French rationalism and eighteenth-century English materialism” (115). Erastianism is a doctrine that promotes the state’s superiority over the church. According to Altick, proponents of the Oxford Movement saw the Whig’s political policies leading to the “complete subservience of the Church to the temporal power” (209).

27 Similar to my assertion, Dieleman states: “Victorian religious writers crafted individual voices, producing religious work that can more often be associated with male writers or speakers in their own denominations than with other Christian women writers” (13).
Communion liturgy, the practice of daily worship and prayer, and the pattern of the liturgical year shaped her writing.

Another method of inquiry I will use to analyze Rossetti’s writing is narrative typology. Rossetti would have been familiar with typology. Tractarian leaders, such as Isaac Williams and John Keble, were regularly engaged in narrative-based typology, stemming from biblical and patristic texts (Ludlow 12) and therefore typology would have, as Ludlow explains, “shape[d] Rossetti’s own hermeneutics” (12). Rodney Edgecombe in his essay “Typology and After: A Taxonomy of Variants,” summarizes typology as “traditionally conceived, [and] turns on a sequence of signifiers surmounting (or better, extracted from) a Biblical narrative . . . . [Further,] [t]ypology involves a match of patterns—the knitting up of historical narratives across time” (5,6). Importantly, for Edgecombe, typology for “[c]hapel Christians,” like Rossetti, because of their daily devotional and ecclesiastical practices, “tended to assimilate the rhythms [of the bible]” (“A Typology of Allusive Practices” 29). In other words, the typological structures that form Rossetti’s writing result from her exposure to daily bible readings and similar typological texts like John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. Likewise, there are a few examples of typological readings of Rossetti’s poetry, such as John Westerholm’s “Christina Rossetti’s ‘Wounded Speech.’” Westerholm proposes a narrative typological pattern in Rossetti’s poetry “shaped by the circularity of the Christian experience of sin, repentance and repeated sin” (346). Westerholm’s idea is founded on a typical narrative pattern found in the bible. My thesis will expand Westerholm’s circular narrative typology and include another narrative pattern that is a spiral-shape.

The primary objective of my inquiry is to understand the relationship between Rossetti’s literary and religious influences and the narrative pattern of what I will term a “soul journey” and how Rossetti engages this pattern in her poetry as well as in her
devotional prose. My analysis of Rossetti’s devotional writing is shaped by Dieleman’s statement that “distinctive religious-poetic voices can arise from religious imaginaries formed by and in response to liturgical practice” (13). In this way, I posit that the structure of the soul journey in Rossetti’s writing mirrors a pattern influenced by other religious writings, and also found in the Anglo-Catholic liturgy and the liturgical year. In essence, my thesis will examine how Rossetti uses the spiral structure of a soul journey across a variety of genres and themes to create a stable, consistent life pattern that helps her readers navigate a volatile and ever-changing world.

In Chapter Two, “‘From House to Home’: Structure of a Soul Journey,” I will explain the spiral structure of the soul journey, which will provide the framework for the rest of the thesis. Essential to my analysis is establishing a definition of soul journey and, therefore, I will enter into a brief discussion of the soul, with a specific emphasis on the philosophy of an “ensouled body.” Next, my inquiry into this spiral soul journey pattern will focus on the spiral pattern found in Dante Alighieri’s The Divine Comedy, John Bunyan’s The Pilgrim’s Progress, and Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s In Memoriam. Next, I will explain how this spiral pattern is a structure for Rossetti’s devotional prose works and how the same pattern operates in individual poems. Finally, I will use the soul journey pattern to analyze Rossetti’s narrative poem “From House to Home.”

In Chapter Three, “‘Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread’: Hope and Hospitality in Christina Rossetti’s Devotional Writing,” my inquiry into Rossetti’s writing focuses on the themes of hope and hospitality in Rossetti’s writing. After defining and discussing hope and hospitality, I will move on to show how these themes are interwoven with Rossetti’s own Anglo-Catholic liturgical practices. Drawing on the idea that the soul’s journey is essentially a “journey through matter” (Abraham Tucker The Nature of Light Pursued 222) and also a journey in matter (ensouled body), I will emphasize the
importance of the bodily experiences of a liturgical practice, specifically, the habit of reading a daily devotional and also the participation in the Communion liturgy, with a special focus on the Sacrament of the Eucharist. With this in mind, I define liturgy, generally, and within the Anglo-Catholic context, and show how liturgical practices play a crucial role in the soul’s journey and, with this in mind, I trace the spiral pattern through the specifics of the Communion Liturgy. Next, I connect the Sacrament of the Eucharist to a close reading of the narrative poem, “Goblin Market” and the devotional poem “A Better Resurrection.” Lastly, I discuss how Rossetti contributes to her community and the Communion of Saints by remastering biblical and liturgical texts and creating new liturgical devotions.

In Chapter Four: “‘On Earth as it is in Heaven’: Keeping Time with the Divine Rhythm in Christina Rossetti’s Daily Devotional Time Flies,” the focus of my analysis is Rossetti’s devotional book Time Flies: A Reading Diary. Rossetti, who was influenced by devotional writers such as John Keble, wrote Time Flies in accordance to the pattern of the liturgical calendar. Time Flies reflects Rossetti’s own devotional practices of reading a daily devotional that follows the pattern of a liturgical year. The focus of my inquiry is on the 33 entries found in the appendix. These 33 entries are for specific holy days in the liturgical calendar, which allow me to trace the spiral structure over the entire liturgical year. Time Flies, I argue, is one example how Rossetti’s attempts to engage her readership in meaningful devotional practices that promote a transformational spiritual life. Krista Lysack in her essay, “The Productions of Time,” argues that Rossetti’s Time Flies, like John Keble’s A Christian Year, is preoccupied with calling the Victorian readership to find time for spiritual devotion and that the devotional form provided an “antidote to the modern problem of finding time for ‘continuous reading’” in the increasingly busy age of “industrial capitalism” (454). My investigation picks up
Lysack’s assertion that Rossetti’s devotional writings, which were intended to be read every day and follow the rhythms of the liturgical calendar, were created to impact their readership in a tangible way and provide an alternative to the pattern of “industrial time” (454). As part of my analysis, I recognize how Rossetti uses repetition and familiar liturgical themes to draw her reader into the rhythm of the soul journey. I establish that Rossetti created *Time Flies* as a pattern for her readers to follow in order to live a religious and devout life in accordance with God’s divine plan, determined by the rhythm of liturgical time. Furthermore, Rossetti, influenced in part by Tractarian eschatology, understood that the soul journey on earth was preparation for the afterlife. In *Time Flies*, and elsewhere, I claim, it is Rossetti’s main directive to warn her readers of the temporality of this life and the real possibility of an eternity in hell. Furthermore, I confirm that Rossetti, above all else, promoted the merciful and loving nature of God and that she invites her readers to live with the joyful hope of heaven.
CHAPTER TWO: “From House to Home”:

The Structure of a Soul Journey

2.1 The Definition of a Soul Journey

This chapter will set the foundation for the rest of the thesis. My objective is to define the soul journey and then briefly outline the structure of the soul journey as mediated by Dante's Alighieri's *The Divine Comedy*, John Bunyan's Christian allegory, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and Alford, Lord Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. As I already mentioned, some Rossetti critics recognize certain narrative typologies in her writing. The soul journey structure adds to a conversation that is already well-established by scholars such as Westerholm who identify a “circular” (347) structure in some of her poems or Arseneau who sees the speaker in “A Better Resurrection” and “A Birthday” reaching a “higher state” than earlier in the poem (*Recovering Christina Rossetti* 116). I am naming the pattern that these scholars recognize in Rossetti’s writing a soul journey and arguing that this pattern is a spiral-shape. This pattern, I posit, can be traced in Rossetti’s devotional poetry and prose and is a reflection of her liturgical practices. A spiral, rather than a circle, reflects a soul journey that is more than a repetition of “the inescapable round of sin and repentance” (Westerholm 348). Instead, the spiral shape indicates that the soul journey is a soul-progression toward a higher state of being.

First, I will clarify the key terms, “soul” and “journey,” before proceeding to explore how these writers use a particular narrative structure to order the spiritual complexities of a soul journey. I acknowledge that the scope of the soul and the soul journey is immense and the perspectives and definitions regarding the soul are varied and widely debated; therefore, it is my intention to engage with a well-established
narrative structure, the spiral, which is a narrative pattern found in Dante, Tennyson, and Bunyan. Notably, I am not entering into a close reading of any of the texts, but I do acknowledge that each of these writers has had an influence on how Rossetti structured her own devotional writing. After I have outlined some key definitions and concerns, I apply this narrative structure of the soul journey to Christina Rossetti’s devotional writing in general and to the sonnet, “St. Peter,” and the narrative poem, “From House to Home.”

Steven J. Rosen proposes that the soul is a “nonmaterial entity the likes of which cannot be explained by common materialistic definitions. . . [this] life force, [is] the indefinable something that separates a living being from inanimate objects” (The Ultimate Journey viii-ix). Rossetti, in several instances, distinguishes the soul as separate from the body; for example, she writes:

Have dead men long to wait? —

There is a certain term

For their bodies to the worm

And their souls at heaven gate. (“What good shall my life do me?” Verses 1-4)

The soul, in this example, is destined to arrive at the gates of heaven, while the body is set to decompose. So, the soul is not only the nonmaterial part of the human, the life force, but the entity that survives death and has an eternal destination. The soul is the part of our being that is “spiritual” (“Soul,” def. 2a) and journey is defined as “the ‘pilgrimage’ or passage through life” (“Journey,” def. 3b). A “soul journey,” then, is a spiritual pilgrimage, or the non-physical part of a human that experiences a movement from one destination to another. Said another way, the soul journey is a type of spiritual transition that takes place over time. In the words of the eighteenth-century philosopher
Abraham Tucker, “our employments on this present stage, if rightly pursued, are preparatory to the rest of our journey through matter, fitting us for the peculiar functions we shall have to perform in the communion of saints” (The Light of Nature Pursued 222). Tucker views the soul journey in stages, one of which is the soul’s “journey through matter” or its time in a physical body. Further, the time on earth is “preparatory” for the soul’s next stage of the journey into the “communion of saints” (Tucker 222). Similarly, Rosen observes in The Ultimate Journey that, despite superficial differences (such as terms and rituals), many of the world’s religions share common themes regarding soul journeys; he notes that

> [t]he soul journeys to various lands—metaphysical lands, perhaps—after death, with the help of supernatural entities; ultimately, the soul is on its way to a supreme destination which may take many lives, and it goes through numerous tests and trials which enhance its character, rendering it ready to meet its Maker. (ix)²⁸

Rosen’s observation that the soul is on its way to an end goal and that on the way, the soul will experience many “tests and trials,” which are meant to build character and make the soul ready to “meet its Maker,” applies to the general structure of the soul journey. Importantly, in much of Rossetti’s writing, the direction of her focus is certainly heavenward and she therefore she considers earthly time transitory. Yet, there is a purpose for this stage of the “journey through matter” (Tucker 222); the soul has the opportunity to experience a transition here, on earth, before reaching the boundaries of eternity. On one hand, the soul journey is earth and time-bound, dependent on the body’s experiences to provide the tools for spiritual transition. On the other hand, the soul

²⁸ Rosen’s book The Ultimate Journey is a compilation of essays that explore the soul journey from various religions, including Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism.
journey continues beyond physical death, as the soul leaves the body and goes on to experience an afterlife.

Rossetti examines the soul's journey through clock time, specifically liturgical time, yet she is continually anticipating the soul's final destination. Consequently, as one sifts through the large and varied oeuvre of Rossetti's poetry and prose, there is tension between the two definitions of soul she would have inherited from her Greek predecessors, Aristotle and Plato. According to Suzanne Nalbantian, Plato “conceived of the soul as an autonomous entity whose residence in the body was temporary until its liberation at the death of the body” (The Symbol of the Soul from Hölderlin to Yeats 3). Plato's philosophy of the soul, then, sees the soul imprisoned within the body until its departure after physical death. However, Aristotle had a different view than his master Plato; for instance, as Nalbantian observes, “Aristotle had envisaged the soul as form which was entirely dependent on and inseparable from body or matter” (3). In this case, the soul is not imprisoned; instead the body and soul are mutually dependent. This concept of the soul is often referred to as the “ensouled body.”

Karol Wojtyła in The Acting Person demonstrates that Aristotle's concept of the ensouled body has remained within the Christian framework of thought, even after the popularity of Cartesian thought. Wojtyla observes: “The spiritual aspect of man’s acts and action manifests itself in consciousness, which allows us to undergo the experiential innerness of our being and acting” (“Chapter One” 14). According to Wojtyla, the soul, or “spiritual aspect” of a person is dependent on their external “acts and actions.” In fact, it is the consciousness that allows the soul to experience the fullness of living and being. For the “ensouled

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29 The term “ensouled body” can be traced to antiquity, notably, Aristotle’s work De Anima: Ensouled Body.
body, the soul journey, then, becomes a journey in matter, not just through matter. In other words, the soul's transformation is not separate from the experience of the body. Quite to the contrary, what the body experiences, the soul experiences also. The soul is not a disconnected entity along for the ride, but as a sojourner with the body. Furthermore, the goal of the soul journey, according to the early Greek Fathers of the Church, is “gradually being brought to the likeness of Jesus Christ” (Andrew Gerakas 81). The Fathers of the Church saw the soul journey as a spiritual ascent and the “final step in the spiritual ascent is... theosis, the assimilation to the Logos, and union with God” (81). This is concept of theosis or soul-union with God is especially important in the subsequent chapters as I explore the concept of the Communion liturgy and also the liturgical year in Rossetti’s writing.

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30 Similarly, Andrew Gerakas asserts, based on the teachings of the Early Church Fathers, “spirit and matter in a human being have more things in common than they have differentiating them. They are mutually related and inseparable elements of the single person. While there is an essential difference between the two, they are not in opposition or mutually indifferent to each other. The intrinsic nature of the body is to develop toward the spirit” (84-85). Notably, the spirit is not a prisoner within the body here; instead there is progression, a movement toward “spirit”.

31 I am not the only one to recognize the concept of an ensouled body in Rossetti’s writing. Similarly, Lynda Palazzo argues that “Rossetti’s idea of spirit can be likened to Melissa Raphael’s theology, ‘a spirituality that locates the spirit/soul within the body, rather than, as in the Cartesian dualism, as opposite to it’” (Raphael qtd. in Palazzo 141). As Palazzo notes, Rossetti's writing is evidence of a theology that asserts that the soul and body are interdependent, rather than in opposition to each other. Further, as Palazzo observes, this reconnection of the body and soul in Rossetti's writing results in “a record of the spirit moving through the realities of their daily lives, so the focus of her theology becomes the life of the spirit in her own daily experience” (141). Indeed, the physical body and the soul are intertwined and each bodily experience has an impact on the soul's state.

32 Gerakas is basing his assertion on the writings of Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa.
2.2 The Shape and Direction of a Soul Journey

The structure of the soul journey in Rossetti’s writing is, in part, influenced by her engagement with the liturgical calendar, including the festivals (Advent, Christmastide, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Whitsun, and Trinitytide), as well as through the season of ordinary time. The pattern is a repetitive, circular, pattern, closely tied to the rhythms of nature (seasons) and the cosmos (moon, sun, stars). The circle implies a continuity, a shape with no beginning and no end. Yet, within this circle is the movement of the pilgrim on the soul journey, which is more like a spiral shape. The spiral-shape is always in motion and there are two distinct directions: first the spiral winds down toward a centre and then it turns and ascends the spiral once again. Like circles, the spiral shape is visible in the natural universe around us and within us. Melissa Gayle West, a practitioner and scholar of the ancient practice of labyrinth walking, calls the spiral “a map for the growth and transformational processes of life itself” (*Exploring the Labyrinth* 34). The spiral shape, West says, is visible in the “patterns of a pinecone. . . the vortex of water spinning down a drain, . . . [and] winding code of our DNA” (34). Notably, spirals “have been inscribed in stone around the world over since Megalithic times” (34). Spirals are a universal symbol and they are reflection of a natural geometry that symbolizes transformation and growth.

The motion of the spiral can be applied to narrative structure. The spiral shape of this narrative resonates in Pierce Gallais and Vincent Pollina’s examination of the narrative structure in Medieval literary texts. First Gallais and Pollina recognize that “narrative is a discourse which *unwinds* (*se deroule*), a story which situates itself in time (this time is three fold: the time of the action recounted, the time of writing, and the time of reading)—time which “unwinds” . . . for the spiral alone can be said to unwind: that is its definition and its function” (115-16). In their view, narrative, by its very nature, is in
the shape of a spiral. The narrative unwinds as it is retold, as it is recorded, and again unwinds as the story is read. Importantly, each time the narrative unwinds, it is just a little different. Now if the same spiral movement is applied to the pilgrim, each time he or she travels down the spiral and up again, the soul experiences a change. Narrative both imitates the movement of the spiral structure of the soul journey and mediates the soul journeyer’s path.

2.3 The Soul Journey Structure in Dante’s The Divine Comedy

It is no secret that the entire Rossetti family, including Christina, was significantly influenced by the writings of Dante. Her, father, Gabriele, a professor of Italian at King’s College, London, was a scholar of Dante. He was so immersed in the study of Dante that in 1828, “his first-born son received Dante as his third baptismal name” (Marsh 21). Influenced by their father's Dante “scholarly obsession” (Roe 64), the four Rossetti children all conducted their own Dante scholarship. Christina's own interest in Dante would have begun at a young age and continued throughout her life. She even attended a series of Dante lectures at University College London from 1879-80 (Roe 64). Notably, however, Rossetti's interest in Dante differs from that of her Victorian contemporaries, including her own father and brothers. As Roe notes, “Rossetti inherited a legacy of Dante interpretation which sat uncomfortably with her devotionalist aesthetic” (60). Instead, Rossetti focuses on Dante through the lens of the Christian

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33 Supported by Charles Lyell (father of geologist Charles Lyell Jr.), Gabriele Sr. published a commentary on Inferno in 1825/6. (Marsh 21)
34 For instance: Maria Rossetti published a critical work, A Shadow of Dante (1871); Dante Gabriel Rossetti, in the late 1840s, began to translate Dante’s Vita Nuova (Weintraub Four Rossettis 35); examples include Dante Gabriel’s sonnet “Dante da Maiano” (rossettiarchives.org) and his book Dante and His Circle: With the Italian Poets Preceding Him (1100—1200—1300); and William Michael Rossetti published a commentary on Dante’s Inferno in 1864 (Marsh 321).
35 Similarly, Arseneau argues that Rossetti’s “published and unpublished comments on Dante both demonstrate her desire to forge her own critical position in a field haunted by
religion. For instance, Rossetti, in an essay “Dante, An English Classic,” published in

*The Churchman's Shilling Magazine* (1867) writes,

> Many desultory readers entertain, we suspect, no adequate idea of the plan and working out of the “Divina Commedia” as a whole, and have not even grasped its plot in the baldest outline; how Dante, ensnared by earth, yet cared for by heaven, can only be disenthralled from the past and renewed for the future by exploring the world of desperate ruin, the world of hope, and lastly, that world which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man to conceive; how the lost love of earth is found again as one higher, lovelier, and better loved in paradise; and how even this sainted and exalting passion pales at last, and is, as it were, no more accounted of before the supreme revelation of the love of God. (*Selected Prose of Christina Rossetti* 170-71)

Here, we can see the bite of Rossetti's criticism toward secular interpretations of Dante's *Divina Commedia*, but what I would like to highlight is her interest in the overall structure of the *Commedia*, which is a spiral down to a “world of desperate ruin” and a spiral up to a “better loved paradise.” Rossetti’s view of the soul in Dante’s writing is closer to Plato’s definition of the soul, which is a soul imprisoned, or, in Rossetti’s words, “ensnared by earth, yet cared for by heaven.” According to Rossetti, the *Commedia* is Dante's expression of his earthly pilgrimage, past, present and future, which ends in the vision of paradise, and is a reflection of his relationship to God, who is a God of love.

The spiral-structure of the soul journey in Dante's *Commedia* is crucial to how I understand Rossetti's writing. For instance, the spiral structure of Dante's pilgrimage or...
soul journey, according to John Freccero's essay, “Dante's Pilgrim in a Gyre,” has both a shape and a direction; he says,

It appears from the text, and particularly from the flight of Geryon in Canto XVII of the *Inferno*, that the descent into hell is accomplished by a clockwise spiral, and there seems to be no doubt that the ascent of the Mount of Purgatory is counter-clockwise . . . The diurnal motion of the heavens is a uniform circle, whereas the pilgrim moves spirally. (168, 171)

In other words, the pilgrim is on a continuous descent and ascent (clock-wise spiral down and counter-clock-wise spiral up) while the movement of the Godhead is a uniform circle. The pilgrim, while on this earth, is destined to travel the spiral, while the movement of the heavens keeps the time. The wanderings of the pilgrim have no effect on the circularity of the heaven. In fact, the goal of the pilgrim’s journey is to continue to travel the spiral until he or she begins to travel the same path as God. In other words, the pilgrim has arrived at his or her destination when his or her path matches the unchanging circularity of God. Freccaro continues: “It is the will's nature to remain forever unsatisfied until it reaches God, and it cannot reach Him until He is seen face to face” (180). Perfection cannot be reached, the heavenly hope cannot be fulfilled, until the pilgrim's final destination is reached: the final descent, death, and final ascent, resurrection of the soul, into the presence of God. Notably, the pilgrim may travel the full route of the spiral several times in one lifetime and each time they travel through the course of the spiral, the soul experiences change. If the journey is successful, with each journey of the spiral, the pilgrim becomes closer to Divine perfection.
2.4 The Soul Journey Structure in John Bunyan’s The Pilgrim’s Progress

Rossetti’s poetic imagination would have been influenced by the adventures of Christian and Christiana in Bunyan’s The Pilgrim’s Progress. Christina’s mother, Frances, read Bunyan’s book to the children (Weintraub 6). The influence of Bunyan’s book can be seen in the title of Rossetti’s narrative poem “The Prince’s Progress.” Simon Humphries argues that the structure of “Goblin Market” and the similarly named “The Prince’s Progress” reflects the narrative structure found in Bunyan’s text (“Introduction” Poems and Prose xxxi) and, later in this chapter, I will widen Humphries’s assertion to include “From House to Home.”

In John Bunyan’s allegory, The Pilgrim’s Progress, there is a spiral pattern similar to Dante’s. In this case, the pilgrim, Christian, travels from the “City of Destruction” to the “Celestial City.” The key to Bunyan’s soul journey narrative is that God initiates Christian’s pilgrimage to the “Celestial City.” The soul journey, in fact, begins with a dream-vision; Bunyan writes,

I saw a Man cloathed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a Book in his hand, and a great Burden upon his back. I looked, and saw him open the Book, and read therein; and as he read he wept and trembled; and not being able longer to contain, he brake out with a lamentable cry, saying, What shall I do?” (Bunyan The Pilgrim’s Progress 1)

The vision is of a man in a detestable state; he is clothed in rags with a burden on his back, indicating poverty of the soul. Notably the man is turned from his house, suggesting a direction away from the state he is already in. God initiates the relationship with the man through the Book; the capital letter suggests that this book is the Bible. Bunyan’s idea is Pauline, as Paul writes to the Romans: “So then faith cometh by
hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). The pilgrim “hears” the word of God, through the “Book,” and responds to the call by starting out on his journey.

Christian’s soul journey mirrors the narrative structure proposed by Gallais and Pollina; they observe that “[n]arrative, in particular, will unwind like a spiral, with the recurrence of analogous situations (but not identical ones, for between two spires the circumstances can have changed, and the Subject himself has certainly changed” (123-4). Notably, in Gallais and Pollina's viewpoint, narrative itself is an unwinding spiral and, as the subject of the narrative travels the unwinding spiral, they encounter circumstances that change their character. They continue: “[The pilgrim] will soon realize that they still have a fair amount of road to travel, many difficulties and misunderstandings to conquer, before arriving at the veritable union and communion” (127). The pilgrim's troubles are a necessary part of the soul journey; in fact, the pilgrim's struggles, spiraling downward, are what prepares them for the consummation of the soul journey, which is true communion with God, or entry into paradise (heaven). For instance, after passing through the “Wicket Gate,” which is the sign that he is on the correct “Way” (18), and receiving his scroll, proof of his salvation, Christian begins his soul journey to “The Celestial City,” Bunyan’s term for heaven. Along the way, he has companions that both help and hinder his progress.

During his journey, he experiences several spirals down and spirals up. Christian encounters many foes, including demons and giants. For instance, Christian and his companion Hopeful find themselves in the dungeons of Doubting Castle, the prisoners of Giant Despair (128). This point of the narrative represents one of the many downward spirals in Christian’s soul journey and likely the lowest point in his journey, as he declares, “My Soul chooseth Strangling rather than Life, and the Grave is more easy for me than this Dungeon” (130-31). Importantly, there is always an upward turn in the
spiral. His companion, Hopeful, urges him to think of “Lord of the Country” (131) and not give his life over to Giant Despair. Instead, they “continued together (in the Dark)” (131-32), until, after days of weakening, yet praying, Christian discovers that he held the key to the prison lock, called “Promise” (134). From there, the pilgrims, take an upward journey to the “Delectable Mountains” (135), where they encounter Shepherds who encourage them on the next stage of the journey. The final spiral up and spiral down occurs at the end of Christian’s journey, when he passes through the waters of the river (181-83) up to the gates of The Celestial City.

2.5 The Soul Journey Structure in Tennyson’s In Memoriam

Lastly, in Tennyson's elegy, In Memoriam, the soul journey is allegorized by a journey through grief after the loss of a dear friend. Tennyson, Rossetti’s contemporary, is a probable candidate for influencing Rossetti’s poetry. As I will explain later, Rossetti’s poem “From House to Home” shares similarities to another Tennyson poem, “The Palace of Art.” The chronological structure of In Memoriam is an illustration of the earlier observation that God's time is circular and is kept by the turn of the seasons.

Notably, the internal structure of In Memoriam takes place over three calendar years.36 Also, like Dante's pilgrim, the speaker's journey is a spiral down and a spiral up through each stanza. Sarah Gates in “Poetics, Metaphysics, Genre: The Stanza Form of In Memoriam” observes:

36 A. C. Bradley notes: The most obvious sign of definite structure in In Memoriam consists in the internal chronology. . . Between the Christmas poems there come occasional sections indicating the progress of time by reference to the seasons and to the anniversaries of the death of the friend; and between two Christmas poems we never find a hint that more than one spring or one summer has passed, or that more than one anniversary has come round. After the third Christmas we have a spring poem (CXV), but after this no sign of summer or of the return of the anniversary of the friend's death. (“The Structure and Effect of In Memoriam” 122)
The movement... is one of vacillation (a to bb, and back to a), of gesturing backward (a→a), and of leading beyond (bb→a). Rather than characterize this movement as a circle, I would call it a spiral, a figure that includes the backward forward gesturing of vacillation, the repetition risking stasis (the central concentration), but also the outer diffusion, the movement beyond. The ends do not quite meet: the first “a” raises the anticipation of the second, but the intervening couplet interrupts the closure, or deflects the rhyme, so that the second “a” recollects, but differs from, the first. The outer lines, therefore, gesture toward enfolding the inner lines, but at the same time, the inner lines break through, or refuse this enfolding gesture. (232)

According to Gates, the stanza form of *In Memoriam* is a movement forward through the lines that continually reflects backward and also motions forward. In other words, each turn of the spiral through the stanzas motions toward the speaker’s soul progression. The speaker is destined to travel the whole poem caught in the repeating pattern of the stanza form until the resolution of the final stanzas when the speaker declares his hope in the promise that he will be reunited with his friend in God; he utters,

That friend of mine who lives in God,

That God, which ever lives and loves,

One God, one law, one element,

And one far-off divine event,

To which the whole creation moves.

(Epilogue 140-144)

Like Dante's and Bunyan's pilgrims, the *In Memoriam* speaker's soul journey unwinds from stanza to stanza in a perpetual spiral down and spiral up, until they reach their final destination, which is, in this case, the epiphany that one day he will be reunited with his
friend “who lives in God” (140). In this case, the paradisiacal vision is not consummated, but instead the speaker is left to wait in hope, the soul journey not quite complete.

2.6 The Soul Journey Structure in Rossetti’s Devotional Writing

Now I will turn to examine Rossetti’s application of the downward spiral to upward spiral structure with some general observations of how she uses this narrative structure, both as a framework to sequence her devotional works and at the level of individual poems. First, I need to make clear that the end goal for the soul journey in Rossetti’s devotional works is unification with God, usually in some version of paradisiacal vision or in a deeper revelation of God’s love. Each turn of the spiral indicates a soul-progression. Even as the soul spirals downward, the progression is toward a deeper understanding of God. For Rossetti, all soul journeys begin with God and end with God. In this vein, Rossetti writes:

Thou art Thyself my goal, O Lord my King:
Stretch forth Thy hand to save my soul:
What matters more or less of journeying?
While I touch Thee I touch my goal,
O Sweet Jesu. (“Lord Jesu, Thou art sweetness to my soul” Verses 6-10)

The goal of the soul journey is a reunion with God, or, as I will explain in a close reading of Rossetti’s poem “From House to Home,” a homecoming. David J. Leigh observes this return to God in his study of spiritual autobiographies; he says that the narrative structure of a soul journey is a “spiral [that] usually moves downward away from the ultimate goal but often finds illusory objects parallel to the original directional image before recovering and reaching the authentic goal” (19). If the ultimate goal is God, the journey begins at God, spirals downward, recovers, then eventually the soul is reunified with
God; notably, there is a transformation during the spiral down and the reunion with God becomes an “authentic” relationship, which denotes a deeper, more genuine relationship between the person and God. In this way, the soul journey can be viewed as a journey from birth, to life, to death, and back to God. Also, this journey may take place several times over a person’s lifetime as they learn, mature, and experience a more “authentic” relationship to God. For Rossetti, this authentic relationship to God was mediated by the traditions of the Anglo-Catholic faith, a topic I will take up to a greater extent in Chapters Three and Four. Also, in her devotional writing, we see Rossetti calling her readers to reach beyond the external to the internal, to the deepest part of their soul where God dwells. For instance, in “Deep calls to deep,” she writes, “man’s depth would despair / But for God’s deeper depth: we sow to reap, / Have patience, wait, betake ourselves to prayer” (Time Flies 83). Here, Rossetti illustrates the downward movement of the soul journey. God is at the center, at the deepest part of the spiral, deeper than our emotions, and God calls the pilgrim beyond their feelings of despair. The pilgrim is to respond with prayer and patience. The soul journey takes discipline and time, just as the farmer sows seeds and waits to harvest.

Essential to the soul journey structure is that God initiates the journey and the pilgrim responds. For example, in Rossetti’s sonnet, “St. Peter,” the relationship between the speaker and God is explained using the St. Peter narrative. The poem begins with a question asked by St. Peter himself: “Lord doest thou wash my feet?” (1). Rossetti is recalling the story of Jesus washing the disciples’ feet on the night of his arrest. Important here is the posture of the Lord; Jesus is the one who bends down to meet

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37 These words echo Psalm 42:7: “Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.”
38 See John 13:4-14 for the story of Jesus washing the disciples’ feet. In particular, the dialogue between Peter and Jesus, and the question, which Rossetti repeats in her opening line of the poem, “Lord, dost thou wash my feet?” (John 13:6).
Peter; Jesus is the one to initiate. She reiterates this concept in the next line, except the speaker stands in for St. Peter; she says: “Much more I say: Lord doest thou stand and knock / At my closed heart more rugged than a rock” (2). She employs the image of Jesus standing and knocking at the door of her heart, an echo of the scripture, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hears my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (KJV, Revelation 3:20). Both images reflect a God who is relational and desires intimacy with his disciples. Also, the washing of the disciples’ feet, and waiting at the door for entry are examples of humility and hospitality. Notably, Rossetti’s image of God portrayed in “St. Peter” and, I suggest, in general, is defined by a gentle and loving picture of God, a God who serves and who politely waits for a response.

Again, in the soul journey, God remains constant and it is the person who needs to change, thus, after God initiates the relationship, he or she responds and the spiral journey toward centre begins. As an illustration of this next step, again, I return to Rossetti’s “St. Peter.” We learn that the speaker has a “closed heart more rugged than a rock” (3). The speaker’s hard heart must experience a change before she can experience a union with God. In a few lines, she will take a soul journey that is first marked by a confession of wrong-doing: “Owls roost within and dancing satyrs mock. / Lord, I have heard the crowing of the cock / And have not wept: ah, Lord, Thou knowest it” (6-8). She admits the untamed state of her being: “owls roost within” (6) and “dancing satyrs mock” (7). The hard consonant sound at the end of the lines “knock” (2), “rock” (3), “mock” (6), “cock” (7), emphasize the hardness of the speaker’s heart. Importantly, her confession of betrayal, “I have heard the crowing of the cock” (7), mirrors St. Peter’s betrayal of Jesus in the Easter narrative, which also marks the beginning of the turn in her soul journey.
Again, the soul journey, initiated by God and directed by God, spirals down to the centre, where the pilgrim faces the darkness of his or her soul. But, he or she will not remain there, eventually the pilgrim will hear God and respond again, this time with an ascent back up the spiral with a changed heart. God remains present at all times during the soul journey, even though the pilgrim may only see darkness. In Rossetti’s “St. Peter,” despite the speaker’s hard and untamed heart that cannot weep, she still can hear God calling to her: “Yet, still I hear Thee knocking, still I hear” (9). The speaker, hearing God knocking, God’s persistence emphasized by the repetition of “still I hear” (9), draws her upward out of his darkness. The final quatrain is God instructing her to “Open to Me, look on Me eye to eye” (10). Again, this line evokes a relational God, a God who meets us “eye to eye” (10). This image suggests intimacy, reflective of a lover asking his pursued to look at him full in the face or a loving parent comforting or disciplining a child. There is a pause, a breath, in these words and then a purgation of the heart, “that I may wring thy heart and make it whole” (11). The heart needs to be cleansed, “wrung” of its impurities so that the Lord may “teach thee love” (12) and the result is that the speaker and their Lord are united and they will thus “sup . . . in gladness soul with soul” (13). By the end of the poem, the speaker’s hard heart changes. This is reflected by a change from hard sounds of “rock” and “mock” to the soft, round sounds of “whole” (11) and “soul” (13) and, thus, the soul journey has reached the top of the spiral once again and the speaker is united with the Lord, and is invited to “sup with thee in glory by and by” (14). The word “glory” conveys a vision of the final banquet, where the speaker will be experience theosis, a complete union with God.

As stated earlier, Rossetti uses this soul journey structure as a way to sequence larger devotional works, as well as to structure individual poems, like “St. Peter.” For instance, Kent observes a sequencing that resembles a spiral structure in Rossetti’s
devotional work *Verses*, which is a compilation of poems from several of her previous works (“Sequence and Meaning in Christina Rossetti’s *Verses*” 261).³⁹ Kent argues that Rossetti was quite intentional with the order of the poems in *Verses*, and that it is important to look at the overall sequence; he asserts,

The eight sections of *Verses* dramatize the spiritual pilgrimage of the poet-speaker, who begins in confessions of guilt “self-contempt and blame” (267), and who gradually achieves understanding of, and faithful resignation to God’s will. The sequence can best be described as having two major movements, or two quatrains of thematic focus. (261-62)

Certainly, from Kent’s thematic observations of *Verses*, a spiral construction can be applied. In the first section, there is a spiral down, which begins with the posture of humility and the act of confession. After the poet-speaker learns “[i]ntimate communication” (262) and all the necessary disciplines for the spiritual life in the fourth section “Gifts and Graces,” Kent argues that the pilgrim is now “[r]econciled with her God,” (262) which prepares him or her for the darkest part of the journey, section five, “The World of Self Destruction” (263). This section, as Kent notes, “marks an abrupt transition. . . [and] underlines sudden shift in perspective. . . [and there are] [d]enunciations of the world” (263) or there is a severing of the worldly concerns and a refocus toward eternity. In the context of the spiral structure, this section marks the turn in the spiraling soul journey and, in section six, the ascent up the spiral begins again. The conclusion of *Verses*, is of course, the end goal of the soul journey for Rossetti, which is

³⁹ Kent notes that *Verses* contains “no ‘original’ compositions, [but were] previously published by Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) in three books of devotional prose: *Called to be Saints: The Minor Festivals Devotionally Studied* (1883), *Time Flies: A Reading Diary* (1885), and *The Face of the Deep: A Devotional Commentary on the Apocalypse* (1892).” Also, Kent observes that Rossetti “made over 800 individual changes in the more than 300 religious lyrics as she prepared *Verses* for publication. . . [Notably], she also fashioned a unified poetic sequence out of this mass of heterogeneous materials” (261).
the “New Jerusalem and Its Citizens” (Verses 152). Similarly, Dieleman notes in Verses a soul progression, which I am suggesting resembles a spiral:

For the poems in Verses are not a mere conglomeration of concentrated spiritual moments. Rather, Rossetti arranged them so as to convey the progress of the spiritual life. . . [The sequence of poems] loosely echo the liturgical pattern of entering to encounter God (section 1), moving through the modes of confession, comfort and renewal after Christ (sections 2-4), and going out again for further living in the present (sections 5-8). (163)

As Dieleman suggests, Verses is about a “spiritual pilgrimage” (165) and the poems are sequenced in order to demonstrate the direction and nature of this pilgrimage. This sequence is based in liturgical time and, in fact, there is a whole section of poems in Verses that are liturgical poems (section four). In Chapter Four, I will build on Kent and Dieleman’s work on sequencing in Verses and look at the spiral structure through liturgical time in Rossetti’s devotional work Time Flies: A Reading Diary. For the next section, I will use the spiral structure of the soul journey to guide a close reading of Rossetti’s narrative poem “From House to Home.”

2.7 The Soul Journey in “From House to Home”

The title of Rossetti’s poem “From House to Home” represents one way to view the soul journey. The apparent redundancy of “house” and “home” might suggest retreat and stasis. However, the word “from” shows direction. The poet-speaker will tell the story of her journey from one state of her soul into a better, exalted state of her soul. The speaker moves from her “house,” a place to dwell, to live, but not quite “home.” The metaphor of moving from house to home operates on two levels in Rossetti’s poem. First,

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40 “From House to Home” first appeared in Rossetti’s first volume of poetry Goblin Market and Other Poems (1862). Like Bunyan’s The Pilgrim’s Progress, the poem uses dialogue and a dream-vision to allegorize the soul’s journey.
it is the pilgrim’s individual journey from earthly house (life) to heavenly home (death).

Second, the journey from house to home is a transformation narrative, using the spiral structure of the soul journey as previously explained. The pilgrim has begun at one place, the house, and has achieved a higher level, the home.

Certainly, this metaphor is steeped in a domestic, feminine understanding of the difference between house and home. You can live in a house, but you still may feel far from “home.” The word “home” holds a warmth and a depth beyond the ordinary “house.” For instance, house, “a building for human habitation” (“House,” def. 1a), is distinguished from home,

[t]he place where one lives or was brought up, with reference to the feelings of belonging, comfort, etc., associated with it, a refuge, a sanctuary, or a place or region to which one naturally belongs or where one feels at ease.

(“Home,” def. 2b, 4)

Therefore, home is different from a house in the sense that being there brings an awareness of solace and repose, a feeling that often comes with security. Indeed, a home is a place where family gathers and rests and, in this way, the home can be a sanctuary or “refuge,” or a safe place to come back to. Also, home, if one is not living in one’s native land, becomes a place that one remembers and one longs to return. House, on the other hand, is also a place to inhabit, perhaps a temporary shelter, but lacks the warmth, the familial connotation of the word home.

From the title, we are aware that the first “house” is temporary and that, with all its fair and pleasant days, this place is not the authentic goal of “home.” The poet-speaker in “From House to Home,” begins her soul journey at a pseudo-type Garden of
Eden, a pastoral setting. She calls this place a “pleasure-place within my soul; / An earthly paradise extremely fair” (6-7). This “earthly paradise” (7) is a figurative place, “within [her] soul” (6). We are reminded that because this is a soul journey, the transformation will take place at the soul level. Yet, in order to understand the complexities of the spiritual realm, Rossetti anchors her description of the soul’s journey in an actual place. Like Bunyan, Rossetti uses a landscape to allegorize the movements of the soul through the spiral journey. So, the speaker describes, in detail, the landscape of her “pleasure-place” (6); she says:

Swift squirrels on the pastures took their ease,

With leaping lambs safe from the unfeared knife;

All singing-birds rejoicing in those trees

Fulfilled their careless life. (21-24)

The repetition of the soft consonants throughout this stanza evokes serenity. Image after image of nature’s animals living in harmonious peace weave through the next four stanzas. Furthermore, the season is summer: “My trees were full of songs and flowers and fruit” (26). Yet, there is a tenuousness to the images. We already know that the first house “was like a dream” (1) and that the “castle stood of white transparent glass” (13). The glass castle emphasizes the dream-like state and also the fragility of the speaker’s “house.” The transparency of the glass evokes a sense of emptiness and coldness; the glass castle is a superficial house that lacks the warmth and heart of a real home. Also,

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41 Similarly, Lona M. Packer in “Symbol and Reality in Christina Rossetti’s Goblin Market,” acknowledges that the garden in “From House to Home” is Eden-like. She suggests that garden “strikes one as a child’s rather than an adult’s conception of the earthly paradise, and in fact [she says] probably originated in Christina’s childhood memories of Holmer Green, her grandfather’s country cottage in Buckinghamshire where until she was nine she was accustomed to spend her summers” (377).

42 The image of a castle made of glass is an allusion to Tennyson’s poem “The Palace of Art.” The pattern of Tennyson’s poem shares elements with the spiral structure of Rossetti’s “From House to Home.” The glass castle in both instances emphasizes the fragility of speaker’s current state of being and the false sense of power and security.
she was living in “an earthly paradise supremely fair / That lured me from [her] goal” (7-8). The speaker reveals that this outwardly perfect paradise, in fact, “lured” her away.

Yet, the poet-speaker is not alone in this temporary “earthly paradise” (7). There is a companion that walks with her in this garden of pleasures: “Ofttimes one like an angel walked with me” (42). In the Garden of Eden narrative, there is also a companion, God, who walks with the man and the woman: “And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day” (Genesis 3.8). Echoing the Genesis narrative, this supernatural being “with aureole round his head” (52) teaches her: “I have no words to tell all things we talked, / All things that he revealed” (59-60). Importantly, this relationship between the divine being and the speaker is edifying and pleasure-filled. They “sang [their] songs together by the way, / calls and recalls and echoes of delight” (54-55). Through the lens of the Genesis narrative, the speaker’s companion is the parental-figure that walks and teaches the man and the woman in the garden. In the same way, the speaker, in the temporary, pleasure-filled paradise, is learning and maturing. The language of this part of the poem, especially the pastoral images and the words of the companion calling for his love to come home, resembles the love poetry in The Song of Solomon. Roe notes that Rossetti alludes to The Song of Solomon in her sonnet sequence “Monna Innominata,” which, according to Roe, “brings the reader’s attention to the tradition of love poetry. . . [and] the enduring truth of its proposition that love is as strong as death” (82). Although Roe is referring to a different Rossetti poem, her argument usefully points out that Rossetti is intentional in her allusion to The Song of Solomon as the images set the intense and highly emotional tone of “From House to Home.” Furthermore, as Roe notes also, Rossetti, in her poem “Consider the Lilies of the Field,” provides a “typological reading of The Song of Solomon, which Christianity read as a prefiguration of God’s love for man and Christ’s love for the Church” (28). If we
extend Roe’s observation to “From House to Home,” the allusion to *The Song of Solomon* strengthens my argument that the companion is in fact God, or Christ himself, who is teaching his beloved along the soul journey.

As her teacher, the companion cannot leave her in the realm of the pleasure-place and he beckons her downward in the soul journey spiral. She lacks maturity and in order to experience the transformational process of the soul journey, the teacher must leave and withhold the pleasures of the earthly paradise. At this point in the narrative, there is a struggle and a misunderstanding on the part of the speaker:

“Tomorrow,” once I said to him with smiles:

“Tonight,” he answered gravely and was dumb,

But pointed out the stones that numbered miles

And miles and miles to come.

“No so,” I said: “tomorrow shall be sweet;

Tonight is not so sweet as coming days.” (65-70)

The speaker knows not why the companion must leave, but her guide is aware that he must go and leave her in the “earthly paradise” and that his departure is sure to cause her suffering. Yet, he knows that his departure is another step in the teaching process. The speaker’s plea, “No so, . . . tomorrow shall be sweet”(69) implies she is unconvinced that her companion is leaving, a doubt she reiterates in the next line: “Tonight is not so sweet as coming days” (70). Despite her emotional petition for him to stay, he turns to leave. Although his departure will cause pain, he promises that he will one day return. Also, as he turns and leaves, he glances back and beckons her to follow: “Come home, O love, from banishment: / Come to a distant land” (75-76). Again, the purpose of the downward journey, suggested by the word “banishment” (75) is to teach and mature the soul and the divine teacher will lead the way.
The speaker’s descent is emphasized by the collapse of the temporary paradise
and the change of seasons. She continues:

That night destroyed me like an avalanche;
One night turned all my summer back to snow:
Next morning not a bird upon my branch,
Not a lamb woke below. (77-80)

The imagery has turned from the sensual, ripe images of the late summer to the bleak
and dark days of winter. In this way, the speaker is experiencing a type of death. Rossetti
evokes the cyclical rhythms of the seasons to emphasize that the speaker’s death is not a
negative, but a death with the promise of spring, a rebirth. She is in the dark of winter,
but her companion and his chorus of angels look on and wait. In her anguish, he calls to
her in encouragement: “Till something whispered: You shall meet again, / Meet in a
distant land” (91-92). The voice brings her further along the soul journey; she begins to
frantically search for her lost love: “I searched day after day, night after night; / Scant
change there came to me of night and day” (97-98). Yet, the darkness deepens; the
pilgrim is reaching the centre of the spiral. All else is gone; her earthly dwelling, her
companion, even the day has ceased to exist for her. She is stripped bare of all her
human comforts and comes to the end of herself and her own power. The anguish of her
fragmentation is accentuated by the absence of light and the speaker’s inability to
articulate words; all that remains is the gnashing, which evokes the intensity of her
suffering. She cries: “No more,” I wailed, “no more:” and trimmed my light, / And
gnashed but did not pray” (99-100). At this point, the speaker’s heart and spirit are
broken, the glass castle of her soul has shattered, a moment anticipated at the beginning
of the poem. She continues, “Until my heart broke and my spirit broke” (101). The word
“until” anticipates a progression, not stasis. In fact, the breaking, although painful, is
necessary for the soul to mature. The speaker continues down the spiral; she says, Upon
the frost-bound floor I stumbled, fell, / And moaned: “It is enough: withhold the stroke. / 
Farewell, O love, farewell” (102-104). Her words reflect a complete surrender; she
acknowledges that only God can end her suffering and stops striving to regain what she
lost. The breaking of her heart is complete. She has reached the centre of the spiral.

As promised earlier in the poem, the speaker’s suffering is only temporary. First
she experiences a type of death and then she will turn toward the light and begin the
upward journey home. The lowest part of the spiral is marked as she utters: “Then life
swooned from me” (105). At the point of her last breath, on the same line, in fact, she
will hear her heavenly hosts break into her darkness:

I heard the song

Of spheres and spirits rejoicing over me:

One cried: “Our sister, she hath suffered long” —

One answered: “Make her see” — (105-08).

Just at the moment of despair and near death, the heavenly hosts intervene on her behalf.
The first steps from the centre of her anguish are still infused with the pain and the
sorrow of loss. The violence of this scene is undeniable; the speaker’s “heart broke” and
“spirit broke” (101). The violent language in this poem echoes the words of metaphysical
poets, like John Donne, who often used forceful and aggressive verbs to describe a
relationship to God. For instance, Donne writes,

43 Similarly, in Bunyan’s  *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, Christian’s darkest moment is when he
comes under the spell of Giant Despair and is held prisoner in Doubting Castle. He is
eventually freed from Doubting Castle when he discovers, after a night of prayer, that he
held the key to the prison door all along (134). In Tennyson’s “The Palace of Art,” the
speaker also descends down the spiral. Like in Rossetti’s poem, Tennyson’s speaker
loses all that has built up around her and it is God who initiates the loss: “Lest she should
fail and perish utterly, / God, before whomever lie bare / The abysmal deeps of
Personality, / Plagued her with sore despair” (221-24).
Batter my heart, three-person’d God, for you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may rise and stand, o’erthrow me, and bend
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new. ("Holy Sonnets: Batter my heart, three person’d God" 1-4)

Donne’s request for God to “batter [his] heart” (1) is part of the soul’s purification process, or to “make [him] new” (4). This suffering is not to punish, but to bring him further along the soul journey. Similarly, Esther Hu in “Christina and the Poetics of Tractarian Suffering” disputes those feminist readings of “From House to Home” that assess the speaker’s suffering as a form of “self-repression, masochism, or self-renunciation” (169). For instance, Gilbert and Gubar claim that, while “Keats can imagine asserting himself from beyond the grave, Rossetti, banqueting on bitterness, must bury herself alive in a coffin of renunciation” (575). Instead, Hu argues that Rossetti’s “understanding of human suffering was based on Tractarian theology” (169). Tractarian discourse, Hu continues, views “[p]ain and tribulation [as a way] to correct faults and cleanse the soul” (170). Like Hu, I argue, the speaker in “From House to Home” did not choose self-renunciation. Her companion, God, initiates the downward

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44 Renunciation, in the context of Gilbert and Gubar’s statement, is most likely the general definition of the word, which is “the action of giving up or forsaking something naturally attractive; self-denial” (OED, n. 1b.). For example, Gilbert and Gubar state: “Like Laura and Jeanie [the female speakers in “Goblin Market”], Rossetti must learn to suffer and renounce the self-gratifications of art and sensuality” (371). Renunciation, in the context of the Christian church, is “the action of renouncing the devil, the world, and the flesh, at baptism” (OED n. 2b.). For instance, the Book of Common Prayer baptismal text reads: “For as much as this child hath promised by you his sureties, to renounce the devil and all his works, to believe in God, and to serve him” (Keeling 266). Also, the act of renunciation is associated with joining a religious order or monastic community. This definition of renunciation is reflected in Rossetti’s convent poems, which were likely influenced by her sister Maria’s entry into an Anglican sisterhood, Society of All Saints. Furthermore, “although Rossetti never sought any formal commitment to a religious life, she periodically turned throughout her career as a writer to the conventual life for subject matter” (Diane D’Amico Faith, Gender, and Time 45).
spiral and the subsequent loss of all the temporary pleasures. After the soul attains purity, through trial and tribulation (the turning point in the spiral structure), the speaker turns from the darkness and begins the ascent upward toward the light.

Before the speaker begins her ascent upward, she pauses, and describes to her listener a dream vision. The vision is a soul journey narrative within the narrative. The speaker will retell the steps of the soul journey through a dream as another way of explaining her spiritual lesson. Rossetti weaves a tension of opposites throughout the dream vision. It appears that the woman in the dream, is, in fact, between life and death (the turning part in the spiral). She says, “I saw a vision of a woman, where / Night and new morning strive for domination” (117-18). The image of the woman is polarizing, which is underscored by the struggle between night and day. Also, the woman stands on “budded flowers” (126), yet, at the same time, “every flower was lifted on a thorn” (129). Again, the woman is struggling between two choices, represented by opposites. Essentially, she can choose to be consumed by the darkness and despair, or she can start climbing toward the light. Contributing to the tension is a demonic presence in the form of “hoarse laughter” (131) and “cruel clapping hands” (132). The demonic noise is an evil contrast to the choirs of angels that seek to console and uplift the speaker. In the soul journey structure, the tension of opposites is the catalyst for the speaker’s growth. The speaker continues, “She bled and wept, yet did not shrink; her strength / Was strung up until daybreak of delight” (133-34). The woman is completely abjected, bleeding and weeping, between life and death, yet it is her abjection where her strength lies. She will persevere in the face of adversity and the promise of the “daybreak of delight” (34)—light in the dark and joy in the suffering—sustains her through the suffering.

45 Similarly, Lynda Palazzo suggests that the woman in the vision is the “embodiment of feminine suffering as a woman sustained between earth and heaven, who strengthens [the speaker] with an apocalyptic vision of heavenly rewards for her renunciation and suffering” (Christina Rossetti’s Feminine Theology 23).
Furthermore, in the dream-vision, like in the soul journey narrative, all might seem lost, but there is a stable presence of the divine. Like the circular, steady movements of the heavens to reassure the pilgrim on their soul journey, the woman in the vision had “a chain [to sustain] her form” (137). This chain is neither “made nor riven” (138). Rather, the anchor that holds the woman is heaven-made: “It stretched sheer up thro' lightning, wind, and storm, / And anchored fast in heaven” (138-40). The chain acts as an anchor to keep the woman from succumbing to the trials of her soul journey.

The vision continues as the woman receives relief from her pain and sorrow and is transformed into a new being. Like the speaker, the woman in the vision is receiving heavenly aid. The angels cry: “Faith quakes in the tempest shock: / Strengthen her soul again” (143-44). The vision parallels the speaker’s own soul journey from exile and pain into a restored relationship with the divine. Importantly, the restoration is not to the original state; instead, the woman experiences a metamorphosis. Again, the language of transformation is illustrated in the pairing of opposites. For instance, she says, “I saw a cup sent down and come to her / Brim full of loathing and of bitterness:” (145-46). Then, the bitter drink is changed; as the woman begins to drink, a “hand distille[d] / New wine and virgin honey” (149-50). The hand, presumably the hand of God, converts the bitter drink to “[f]irst bitter-sweet, then sweet-indeed, until / She tasted only sweet” (151-52)\textsuperscript{46}. A communion between the woman and God takes place and the woman, who was once bleeding and weeping (133), is renewed, which is evident in her youthful glow: “Her lips and cheeks waxed rosy-fresh and young” (153). Furthermore, the gnashing and howling is replaced with a “soft song” (155), a “mystical slow chant” (156). So, the woman who

\textsuperscript{46} The image of the new wine and virgin honey transforming the bitter drink reflects the language of the Sacrament of the Eucharist, which is a topic I take on in length in Chapter Three. For this section, I am interested in how Rossetti uses opposites to explain the transformation process in the soul journey narrative.
once teetered on the edge of darkness, has now begun the ascent into the light, which is magnified by the transformation of bitter to sweet, old to young again, and the howl to the song.

As the curtain closes on the vision, the speaker continues her own personal narrative and will leave her listener with a moral lesson. She says, “Therefore, O friend, I would not if I might / Rebuild my house of lies, wherein I joyed / One time to dwell” (201-03). Indeed, she has learned her lesson, the conversion is complete and then she says, “my soul shall walk in white, / Cast down but not destroyed” (203-04). The white soul alludes to purity, or a complete purging, which shows that her attention has turned away from earthly pleasures and is now focused heavenward. Like the woman in the vision, who struggled between the light and the dark and gained entry into heaven, the speaker resolves to live a godly life.

At this point, Rossetti’s language turns from the whimsical in the previous dream section to obvious biblical allusions, which reinforces Rossetti’s soul journey narrative. The choice of scriptures are directions for continuing the soul journey on earth until the day comes to see heaven once again. She says,

Therefore in patience I possess my soul;[48]

Yea, therefore as a flint I set my face,[49]

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[47] Rossetti’s speaker’s choice to not “rebuild [her] house of lies,” (202) is a direct contrast to Tennyson’s speaker’s decision in “The Palace of Art.” Tennyson’s speaker remarks at the end: “Yet pull not down my palace towers, that are / So lightly, beautifully built: / Perchance I may return with others there / When I have purged my guilt” (293-96). The contrast demonstrates that Rossetti’s speaker has experienced a true conversion at the soul level and desires no longer to return to her old way of living. However, Tennyson’s speaker has not quite given up her worldly pleasures, and, I would argue, hasn’t experienced the same conversion as in Rossetti’s poem.

[48] This is a reply to the instruction in Luke 21:19, which reads, “In your patience possess ye your souls.” (KJV)

[49] She then alludes to Isaiah, which reads “For the Lord God will help me; therefore, shall I not be confounded: therefore, have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed” (KJV, Isaiah 50.7).
To pluck down, to build up again the whole—

But in a distant place.\(^{50}\).

My face is steadfast toward Jerusalem,\(^{51}\)

My heart remembers it. (205-08, 211-12)

Rossetti, in this passage, paraphrases the prophets and the Gospel of Luke, which are images traditionally associated with the Jesus narrative. Yet, the passage is in the first person and, in this way, the speaker is remade into the likeness of Christ. In other words, she demonstrates that she made a complete soul-transformation and has taken on the qualities of Christ by inserting herself into the Jesus narrative. In this vein, she continues by stating the words from Isaiah 61: “Beauty for ashes, oil of joy for grief, / Garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness” (217-16). It is through sorrow, the “ashes,” that the speaker receives joy, the “beauty”. It is through loss that she gains heaven. It is through correction and discipline, “[a]ltho’ today He prunes my twigs with pain,” (221) that she is able to experience the fullness of God. She declares: “Tomorrow I shall put forth buds again / And clothe myself with fruit” (223-24). The speaker has been fully pruned and she anticipates the future with hope.

The language switches from mystic, heavenly visions back to earthy, material metaphors such as this gardening metaphor, which shows that Rossetti uses “earthy” language to describe an earthly habitation. The whimsical visions of angels and demons are applied in the visions of heaven only. In other words, Rossetti is making a clear distinction between the earthly sphere and the heavenly sphere. The speaker is indeed

\(^{50}\) See Jeremiah; he says, “And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the Lord” (\textit{KJV}, Jeremiah 31.28).

\(^{51}\) Rossetti returns to the Gospel of Luke: “And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem” (\textit{KJV}, Luke 9.51).
living on earth in anticipation of heaven. The soul journey is not over; she will experience the decay of time and the change of seasons, a cycle that will continue to mark the presence of the divine. Lastly, the speaker leaves her listener with a warning: “Today His staff is turned into a rod, / Yet will I wait for Him the appointed days / And stay upon my God” (226-28). The shepherd’s rod is a metaphor often associated with God’s discipline. The speaker reminds her listener of God’s “rod,” which denotes the earlier language associated with the purgation of the soul. The discipline appears harsh, perhaps cruel, “yet” (28), the speaker remains faithful to God; she declares in the final lines: “I will wait for Him the appointed days / And stay upon my God” (227-28). These final words reflect a changed soul, one that has learned to trust God through all trials and turbulent times. She has arrived home, a place of relationship and security. Home is a place where she can remain until her “appointed days” (227) or until her physical death.

Again, Rossetti uses a well-established narrative structure, the spiral down and the spiral up, to make sense of the disordered world around her. Suffering is not avoidable, but with direction, the soul journeyer can persevere through the pain and loss to once again experience hope and joy. The soul journey is a daily journey. Once at home, there is still work to be done to maintain and keep the home. If the home is a metaphor for the soul, then the soul must be maintained and sustained. With this in mind, in Chapter Three, “Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread”: Hope and Hospitality in Christina Rossetti’s Devotional Writing, I will expand on the idea that the success of the soul journey depends on a daily dose of God’s word and also regular participation in the liturgy, including the Sacrament of the Eucharist. In this way, I will elaborate the concept that the soul journey is dependent on body’s experiences, in particular liturgical practices. Again, for Rossetti, these practices were rooted in the Anglo-Catholic tradition and, as part of my analysis, I will explore how Anglo-Catholic liturgy influenced
Rossetti’s devotional writing, with a specific focus on the themes of hope and hospitality.
Chapter Three: “Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread”:
Hope and Hospitality in Christina Rossetti’s Devotional Writing

3.1 Introduction: Hope and Hospitality

As stated earlier, life for the Victorians, including Rossetti, was marked by waves of political, social, and religious unrest, yet, despite the increasing secularity in Victorian society, Rossetti’s focus remained on God and her writing demonstrates this devotion. Rossetti’s life and work reflect a person whose mind was stayed on God and this focus on God was aided by a daily liturgical practice that had two actions: private worship and public worship. Rossetti’s devotional aesthetics emerged from these liturgical practices, including the Anglo-Catholic liturgy and daily readings of other devotional writings. Adam G. Cooper refers to the two postures as the “outward and public lectio” (Holy Eros 72) and the “inner and private lectio” (73). Cooper argues that the public lectio is fortified by the private lectio. Lectio, or lection, is “the act of reading” (OED, n.1a). To clarify, the outward posture is, according to Cooper, “an encounter with the enfleshed Logos, whose living voice is heard in the gospel enacted, heard, and read” (70), while the inward posture is “an internal, Spirit-inspired mental and affective grasping of the proclaimed word” (70). As I explained earlier, in the soul’s journey, the soul responds to hearing the Word of God. The direction of the response is a spiral down into the private, inner spheres of being where, rather than remain fixed in static depression, a possible transformation takes place. To complete the journey, the soul must ascend the spiral once again to the public sphere and “preach the gospel of peace” (KJV, Romans 10.15) so others can hear the Word for themselves and respond, or, as Cooper emphasizes, “no one
can believe unless he hears, and no one hears unless someone preaches to him (70).  
Again, this pattern, which fostered a contemplative and meditative mode in the reader, was an alternative to the hurried and externally-focused lifestyles that Rossetti would have observed on the busy streets of Victorian London.  

Rossetti is a poet-disciple. Her purpose: to be a good translator of God’s love.  
For Rossetti, devotional writing is more than words on a page; it is, rather, a liturgy because it is communal, entailing communion and community. Communion, an encounter with the Living God, mediated in the practice of liturgy and within the context of community, cultivates two important qualities of the Christian life: hope and hospitality. Rossetti is not as insular or isolated as readers have sometimes depicted her. Rather, her devotional writing stresses that the interrelation of hope and hospitality is central to her work. The terms “hope” and “hospitality” take on special significance in the context of Rossetti’s writing. For Rossetti, hope is built on the foundation of faith in God. For instance, she writes:

Lift up thine eyes to seek the invisible:

Stir up thy heart to choose the still unseen:

Strain up thy hope in glad perpetual green

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52 Cooper’s assertion is based on Romans 10:14-15, which says, “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (KJV)

53 As Megan Norcia notes in “‘Come Buy, Come Buy’: Christina Rossetti’s ‘Goblin Market’ and the Cries of London,” Rossetti’s residence was in close proximity to “all the major streets full of commercial bustle” (28). Furthermore, Rossetti’s Christ Church was near “York Square where brothels flourished” (28).

54 This phrasing reflects Rossetti’s own words in the “January 2” entry in Time Flies; she writes,“he (or she) cannot be an efficient Christian who exhibits the religion of love as unlovely. Christians need a searching self-sifting on this point. They translate God’s law into the universal tongue of all mankind: all men of all sorts can read them, and in some sort cannot but read them” (Time Flies 2).
To scale the exceeding height where all the saints
dwell. (“Lift up thine eyes to seek the invisible” *Verses* 1-5)

Rossetti’s eyes are on the “invisible” (1) God, who dwells in the eternity of heaven or “perpetual green” (3). Rossetti emphasizes the colour green to evoke the promise of eternal life and the victory over death. Heaven, according to Rossetti, is where “[h]ope and fear are finished at last” (“For All” *Complete Poems* 2). Hope, according to theologian Josef Pieper, is the “virtue of the ‘not yet’” (89). Pieper’s appraisal of hope is based on the assumption the person is in a state of “status viatoris, [or] the ‘condition or state of being on the way’” (91). If the person is on the way, as Pieper says, then there is “a natural orientation toward fulfillment. . . [and] a kind of justifiable ‘claim’ to the happy outcome of his pilgrimage” (93). In this vein, Rossetti writes:

Rouse thy soul to watch and pray and weep

Once again.

Hope afresh, for hope shall not be vain:

Start afresh along the exceeding steep

Road to glory, long and rough and plain. (“February 12.” *Time Flies* 3-7)

Rossetti is encouraging one who is “on the way” (Pieper 91) to “rouse thy soul / . . . once again. / Hope afresh” (3-4). She emphasizes the new beginning by repeating “afresh” and she focuses the pilgrim’s gaze on the “road to glory” (7). The promise is for glory, denoting a fulfillment or the successful end to a journey. Yet, the road is difficult, announced by the phrase “exceeding steep” and the descriptors “long and rough and plain” (7). Hope, then, is to renew the steps of the journeyers, to put their focus on the end goal so that their difficult circumstances are bearable.

With all difficult circumstances, the danger is hopelessness and Rossetti’s command to “rouse” one’s soul is a clear call away from hopelessness. There are two
kinds of hopelessness, according to Pieper, despair and presumption (113), and warnings against both forms are visible in Rossetti’s writing. Both states of the soul, despair and presumption, “destroy the pilgrim character of human existence [and] transform the ‘not yet’ of hope into either the ‘not’ or the ‘already’ of fulfillment” (Pieper 113). If a soul is in a state of despair, Pieper writes, hope is “paralyzed and is frozen” (113). In the narrative poem “Goblin Market,” the speaker, Lizzie, recalls the fate of a girl named “Jeanie” (147), who, after consuming the poisonous fruit of the goblin men, “pined and pined away” (154) and eventually “fell with the first snow” (157). She wanes as the summer fades and eventually all hope is frozen, when, in the first snows of winter, Jeanie dies. Jeanie’s story serves as a warning for Laura, Lizzie’s sister, to stay away from the goblin men and their fruit. Jeanie’s despair results from her conscious choice to partake of the goblin fruit. Similarly, Pieper asserts, “[despair] is not a mood, but an act of the intellect” (114). I do not suggest that Rossetti places the blame on poor Jeanie, but, instead, she reveals a quality that is in all humans, the capability to choose to sin, which may lead to despair if the soul is not “roused” again. Jeanie’s story ends in death, but Laura, who also eats the goblin fruit, even after the warning, is redeemed by the sacrificial act of her sister Lizzie, a thread which I will pick up later in this chapter.

Hopelessness can also mean presumption, which is, according to Pieper, “a perverse anticipation of the fulfillment of hope” (113). The resulting behaviour of this presumption is “overconfidence, an overreaching of one-self, . . . [and] a self-deceptive reliance on a security that has no existence in reality” (Pieper 125). The protagonist, the Prince, in Rossetti’s narrative poem “The Prince’s Progress,” falls into the trap of presumption on the journey to meet his bride. The poem begins as the bride waits for her prince to journey from afar to consummate the marriage. The Prince, “with a flush on his cheek” (43), sets off to meet his bride. However, he is quickly distracted, for, after he
“journeyed at least a mile” (59), he “grew athirst” (60) at the sight of a “wave-haired milkmaid, rosy and white” (58). Aside from the fact that the Prince is tempted by the sight of the first woman he sees, he certainly lacks urgency in getting to his bride. His lack of urgency is based in presumption. He presumes that the bride will be there waiting for him, healthy and well, even if he takes his time getting to her. In fact, the Prince is delayed three times: first for the milkmaid, second in the alchemist’s cave, and, third for another group of women who tend to his injuries. Eventually, so much time has passed that his bride grows old and dies; he arrives to greet her funeral procession. Now, if we view the Prince’s journey as analogous to any pilgrim on the soul journey and the coming together of the bride and bridegroom as the fulfillment of the journey, then the bride dying is a failed soul journey.

Arseneu, in “Pilgrimage and Postponement: Christina Rossetti’s ‘The Prince’s Progress,’” also sees the Prince’s failed quest to meet his bride as a symbolic of an unsuccessful “spiritual pilgrimage” (281). She argues that the “Prince is inclined neither to interpret visible tokens in terms of God’s will nor subordinate the good things of his temporal lot to the better things of his eternal inheritance” (282). The Prince’s spiritual pilgrimage is unsuccessful because he misinterprets the signs. He also puts earthly pleasure before his “eternal inheritance” (282). Again, this is a form of presumption, the type that presumes that “man is able by his own human nature to win eternal life and the forgiveness of sins” (Pieper 126). To be clear, Rossetti’s narrative of a failed soul journey serves to warn her readers not only of the dangers of presumption but also of relying on one’s own resources rather than participating in communal actions to attain eternal life.55

55 Similarly, Arseneu sees “The Prince’s Progress” as “Christina’s comment on her brother’s [Dante Gabriel’s] symbolic technique and the relation that it bears to his religious beliefs” (292).
Essentially, the hope that Rossetti calls for is a hope that Pieper calls a “supernatural hope” (108). Supernatural hope is supported by communion and community. For Rossetti, hope was continually cultivated in the public worship services recited from the *The Book of Common Prayer (BCP)*. For instance, the “Second Sunday in Advent” reads:

> Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience, and comfort of the holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. (Keeling 70)

The manner of waiting in “blessed hope,” for Rossetti, arises from the repetition of reading the holy scriptures. This prayer reminds the congregants that their hope is built on the gift of “everlasting life” and that this gift was given to them by their “Saviour Jesus Christ.” Their hope is not based on the natural or the temporal, but it is supernatural hope, built on Christ and fulfilled in Christ or, as Pieper states, “Christ is the actual foundation of hope. . . [and] Christ, is, at the same time, the actual fulfillment of our hope” (106). This definition of supernatural hope is based in what Eric Auerbach, in his essay “Figura,” calls “figural interpretation.” For Christians, Auerbach explains,

> [f]igural interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second encompasses the first. The two poles of the figure are separate in time, but both, being real events or figures, are within time, within the stream of historical life. . . promise and fulfillment are real historical events, which have either happened in the incarnation of the Word, or will happen in the second coming. (53)
In this way, hope founded on Christ as a “figura” is not a mere abstraction, but concrete, built on “real historical events” (53). The congregants’ supernatural hope, although spiritual, is based on the history of Christ’s first coming, which prefigures Christ’s second coming. Also, Christ’s historical resurrection prefigures the congregants’ future resurrection. Again, hope is the anticipation of this resurrection and “everlasting life” (70). These words of promise take the sting out of death and loss and at the same time encourage an attitude of trust and affection toward the giver of eternal life, God. In the meantime, as The Book of Common Prayer indicates, the congregate is to “inwardly digest [the word]” (70), so that they are able to maintain an attitude and posture of hope.

This blessed hope, which is trust in God, leads to communion on the spiritual level in which Rossetti welcomes God; this posture of welcoming shows us two levels of hospitality. First, in the hospitality of the heart, the individual receives God and then receives spiritual nourishment in return, not as an exchange but free gift for free gift. Hospitality of the heart leads to hospitality in community. Rossetti’s prose uses the example of a saint of the church to explain this spiritual concept. In Time Flies, Rossetti writes:

THIS is that great and holy Benedict, by birth noble, the Patriarch of Western Monachism. About the age of fourteen he fled from the world and its delights, and in a cave near Subiaco a most austere hermit conquered first himself; afterwards waxing mighty to conquer a multitude of souls for Christ. Disciples flocked around him. (56)

Rossetti asserts that Benedict “conquered first himself,” then, he was able to “conquer a multitude of souls for Christ” (56). Again, Saint Benedict’s life demonstrates a spiral down into the inner life, which the territory of the heart is “conquered,” implying a surrender of power. Then, once the action of yielding takes place, the soul is ready for
the spiral upward into the public sphere and, in Saint Benedict's example, he led many
other to follow the monastic life by his teachings.

Hospitality, in the context of a spiritual discipline that leads to a public ministry,
can be better understood by looking at the etymological roots of the word hospitality.
James Heffernan, in *Hospitality and Treachery in Western Literature*, follows Jacques
Derrida:

> The English word *host* looks as if it came from the Latin word *hostis*, but
> *hostis* means first of all “stranger” and then “enemy”—whence the English
> word *hostile*. The word *host* springs not from *hostis* but from its cousin
> *hospes*, which means first “stranger” and then “guest”. From *hospitis*, the
> genitive of *hospes*, come the words *hospitality* and also *host*, which Derrida
> nonetheless traces to the Indo-European *hosti*-pet-s, meaning one who has
> power in the household. (2-3)

In essence, the word hospitality is related to its Latin roots that can mean either
“stranger” or “enemy,” and, then, can also mean “guest.” The word also implies a power
dynamic where the host can give or withhold hospitality. In Rossetti, the posture of
humility becomes the doorway for moving from hostility to hospitality. Humility, for
Rossetti, is a response to the knowledge that God desires a relationship with people,
despite the heredity of sin and this relationship between God and sinners is made
possible because of the atoning sacrifice Christ made on the cross. She declares this
belief in the atonement in the “June 4” entry in *Time Flies*: “O Christ my God Who
knowest the unknown, / Thy mighty Blood was poured forth to atone / For every sin that
can be or hath seen” (2-4). Christ’s atoning sacrifice makes a relationship with God
possible and therefore, one may move from a stranger or an enemy to God to having a
heart that is hospitable, a heart that welcomes God as a guest. In the same way a host
relinquishes his or her power to their guest, with a posture of humility the person relinquishes their power to God and, by releasing control, he or she offers a hospitable space in which God can dwell. Outward hospitality, for Rossetti, is creating feasts with her words, which is spiritual food for a hungry and thirsty community who desires a daily meal of God’s Word, in this case, Rossetti’s own recipe for the Christian life.

3.2 Liturgy and The Soul Journey

For Rossetti, hope and hospitality were nurtured in a spiritual community that practiced a common liturgy. This idea that liturgy is communal is rooted in its ancient origins. Liturgy comes from the Greek *leitorgia*, which, in ancient Athens, before the word liturgy was inscribed with Christian connotations, meant a public service performed by the citizens who paid servants, known as the chorus, to respond to the drama taking place in the public theatre. Thomas Cahill, in *Sailing the Wine-Dark Sea: Why Greeks Matter*, describes ancient Greek theatre in this way:

In time, the dialogue between soloist and chorus became more elaborate, as episodes from one of the myths were reenacted on a circular dancing floor. . . The chorus, arranged around the altar, sang its commentary on the soloist’s story and dance in consecrated movements, while the members of the audience seated in a theatron . . . listened in hushed reverence to the story and supported with their own voices the musical responses of the chorus. This is the essence of what the Greeks called *leitorgia* (work of the people, public service performed with recompense, liturgy). (120)

Cahill’s etymology has two important elements that are related to Rossetti’s own liturgical practices. First, he emphasizes the importance of community participation and performance. Second, he emphasizes that liturgical practice is the action of taking part in a narrative. The Anglo-Catholic liturgy is much like an ancient drama, played out in a
Rossetti’s liturgical practices consisted of, according to Dieleman,

prayers and Scripture readings [that] are all assigned by the prayer book, the people’s responses and even most of the priest’s words are also scripted by the prayer book. . . The words of worship follow a set pattern because the fundamental structures of the world, the fundamental relationships between people and God, remain ever the same. The liturgy calls the participant to remember and dwell in the larger patterns of relationship. (116)

Rossetti participated in a liturgy that required the performance of a predetermined dialogue and set of prayers. The repetition of the same prayers, day after day, year after year, called the participant to “remember,” which is to say, to bring to mind God, repeatedly. In this way, the relationship between the person and God is nurtured.

Repeating this pattern again and again, that is to “dwell” in the pattern of relationship, allows for intimacy. Joseph Ratzinger explains that through ritual and repetition, people “learn how to worship God in the way he himself desires. Cult, liturgy, in the proper sense, is part of this worship” (The Spirit of the Liturgy 17). The liturgy is, according to Cooper's Holy Eros, “saturated with this bodily word. . . in [hearing scriptures] we hear God speaking [and] from [scriptures] the physical actions and signs derive their meaning” (71). The liturgy, then, is bound in our physical experience of the scriptures, or as Oswald Bayer asserts, “human speech is permeated with physicality. . . Word and body, word and action are so bound up together that they cannot be separated” (qtd. in Cooper 71). Further, the “divine liturgy” is the channel "in and through which Jesus Christ, God incarnate, personally communicates himself. . . [the liturgy] constitutes the tangible clothing in which Christ the Lord is to be encountered” (Cooper 71). The
liturgy, then, is how God communes with his people in a tangible way and how the participants physically, emotionally, and spiritually encounter the Living Christ.

Furthermore, this practice of scripted prayer and response is meant to foster relationships among the particular members of the church community and, to a wider extent, the members of other liturgical churches and also the whole body of Christ. The relationship is with the giver, God, and also with the co-participants in the liturgy, and also with the Communion of Saints. Dieleman also notes that the rituals of Anglo-Catholic liturgy, through reciting scripted prayer,

reinforce the historic nature of the communion of the saints: not merely the people presently gathered but the worshipping community of all ages, from the Jewish people at Mount Sinai (the Ten Commandments) to the early Christian church (the Creed) to the church gathered around the first *Book of Common Prayer* in the sixteenth century (120).

In this way, by repeating the same prayers that were read as early as Moses’ day, the people who are reciting the prayers are connected to the Communion of Saints as well as their fellow congregants.

I am concerned specifically with the idea of a daily liturgical practice that follows an established pattern of prayer and ritual. The Anglo-Catholic liturgy of Rossetti’s day was the same diet day after day based on *The Book of Common Prayer (BCP)*. Although all Anglican churches in Rossetti’s time would have used the *BCP*, the Anglo-Catholic’s approach to the liturgy differed from the other Anglican churches. For instances, as Dieleman notes, the “Congregationalist approach tended toward exegesis and application [, while] the Anglican approach tended toward reception (receive the truth again and again, and it will work its effects)” (119). The Anglo-Catholic traditions have more in common with Catholic and Orthodox tradition than with the other Anglican churches.
(Dieleman 112). Particularly, “these traditions do not privilege the verbal but instead see object, ritual, and symbol as equally or more able to manifest the focal meaning of the Christ-event” (112). From Dieleman’s observation, I suggest that the Anglo-Catholic renewed emphasis on ritual and sacrament highlights the embodied experience of the soul journey. In other words, what the body experiences, so does the soul. Thus, as the participant in the Anglo-Catholic liturgy experiences the different postures of the liturgy, his or her soul also experiences the liturgical movements. Furthermore, the Anglo-Catholic liturgy, particularly the Communion Liturgy, was a “movement toward Sacrament, toward an ever-greater sense of God’s manifestation” (Dieleman 114). Like the structure of the soul journey, the goal of the Communion liturgy is to draw the participant toward an ever-increasing intimacy with God.

In fact, the spiral shape of the soul journey is traceable through the Anglo-Catholic Communion liturgy. Dieleman suggests that the Communion service in the Anglo-Catholic church differed from the Congregational service, which can be thought of as a “circle with Scripture and sermon at the core” (103). Instead, Dieleman continues, the Anglo-Catholic Communion liturgy, which emphasized the sacrament of the Eucharist, “progress[ed] in three waves or movements, from preparation to Word to sacrament” (103). Again, the progression was “toward an ever-greater sense of God’s manifestation” (103). I see these waves as loops in the downward spiral of the soul journey while at the centre of the spiral is the Eucharist; after communion (with God) is complete, the participant ascends the spiral once again to live out what has been deposited within.

The Anglo-Catholic liturgy begins as the congregant encounters the church building itself. The church building is consecrated, set aside for the special purpose of worshipping God. The consecration of the church as a “holy space,” Dieleman says,
“points toward the sense of encounter, devotion, and communion with God that pervades the celebration of the sacrament at the end of the liturgy” (103). The sense that God is present in the “holy space” of the church building underlines the movement of the soul toward encounter. Rossetti’s church on Albany street, built in 1837, a building of “neo-classical design” (“Christ Church”), would have had the fundamental architectural features of the post-Byzantine period: expansive, arched ceilings, congregants sitting in rows facing the front of the church, and a centre aisle leading to the main altar where the Communion liturgy was performed. Specific to Rossetti’s Christ Church was an oversized door under a slim bell tower. Some describe the building as “strangely proportioned” (“Christ Church”). What bearing these strange proportions had on Rossetti are undetermined, but for the purpose of my argument, the building was mostly conventional in design. From the moment the congregant enters the building, the focus is on the altar, the centerpiece of the Communion ceremony. With a focus towards the centre, the altar, the congregant begins the Communion service with the second wave of the liturgy, the liturgy of the Word (Dieleman 115). As in the soul journey, each movement in the liturgy of the Word is intended to prepare the soul for encounter and transformation, which in the Communion liturgy is the actual partaking of the Eucharist.

In order to appreciate Rossetti’s devotional writing, it is critical to view that her liturgical practices are lived out in the materiality of her physical reality. For instance, the preparation for the Eucharistic meal begins with hearing the Word and responding and the soul’s journey and transformation is dependent on the bodily encounter with the Word. The congregant hears the assigned hymn of the day, the scripture readings of the day, and the prayer of the day. All are to respond aloud with a scripted response. The encounter with God (the Logos or Word) begins with hearing the Word from an external source, but the reception of the Word is “Spirit-inspired” (Cooper 70) and happens
internally at an affective level. Furthermore, these “liturgies [are] primarily formative rather than just informative” (Smith 7). In Dieleman’s words, these “bodily or material practices inscribe habits of being into the heart” (19). Smith and Dieleman are proposing that the reception of God’s word (Logos) is an embodied experience and I suggest that liturgical practices foster cohesion in the congregant’s being; there is not a separation between cognitive faculty (the practitioner's religious imaginary), the emotional faculty (the heart), or the body. While conversion happens at a soul level, the transition or change affects the whole body, mind, and soul. Essentially, the goal of daily liturgical practices and, specifically the Communion liturgy, which brings us to the center of the spiral, the partaking of the Eucharist, is to attune the participant’s body and mind to the affective. The Eucharist, then, is more than ritual or remembrance, but an encounter with the living Christ at a soul level and the Communion liturgy is designed to prepare the participant for this encounter. As the next section will demonstrate, Rossetti’s writing illustrates that her liturgical practice was more than just going through the motions of prescribed daily readings and prayer, but, for her, the Anglo-Catholic Communion liturgy led to true engagement, true intimacy, and true communion with the God.

3.3 Communion and The Soul Journey

Part of making one’s heart hospitable to God is regularly partaking in the Communion liturgy, which leads to the climax of the liturgy, the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Partaking of the Eucharist in the context of the soul journey is the center of the spiral. The Anglo-Catholic liturgy can be summarized in three movements: “the

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56 Dieleman affirms that liturgical practices first affect the emotions. Dieleman expounds on James K. A. Smith's theory from Desiring the Kingdom and he argues that a human’s fundamental desire for love, for the Holy, is affective, not cognitive (Dieleman 19). Smith refers to this concept as “Augustinian anthropology” (36), suggesting that our “primordial orientation to the world is not knowledge, or even belief, but love” (36). In this way, participation in the liturgy changes the way the participant feels first (his or her affective response), then the way he or she thinks.
introit (introduction or entrance), the liturgy of the Word, and the liturgy of the Communion” (Dieleman 115). The first movements were designed to prepare the participant for partaking in the Communion liturgy. The Communion liturgy is broken into three parts: “the offertory, the thanksgiving, and the communion” (115). The liturgy begins with the prayer for reconciliation; The Book of Common Prayer reads: “Cleanse the thought of our hearts by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen” (Booty 248). The emphasis, again, is on making the heart ready to receive the Eucharist. The posture of the congregant as they listen and recite the opening prayers is kneeling, a posture of humility. After the Ten Commandments is read and the prayer for mercy, the congregant extends their own offertory and prayers for the Queen, government, and the world.

Following the initial prayers, the priest reads the epistle and gospel of the day. Again, these prayers and readings are all to prepare the soul to receive the Eucharist. Finally, after the prayer of the day, the Sacrament of the Eucharist begins with a prayer, which is essentially an invitation to gather at the “Lord’s Supper” (254). My focus now is on the final part of the Communion liturgy, the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and how Eucharistic imagery pervades two particular Rossetti poems: “Goblin Market” and “A Better Resurrection.”

For the Anglo-Catholics, including Rossetti, the bread and the wine were more than symbols for the sacrifice of Christ; the Eucharist was sacramental and infused with the “mystical presence of Jesus Christ” (Keble qtd. in “Tractarians and the Eucharist” 4). In this vein, John Keble writes in “Holy Communion”:

Fresh from th’atoning sacrifice
The world’s Creator bleeding lies.
That man, His foe, by whom He bled,
May take Him for his daily bread. (9-12)

The Eucharist, in Keble’s poem, is expressed in present tense and in realist terms. According to “Tractarians and the Eucharist,” the bread and the wine are an “outward form” of grace, or “the signified grace is linked with the sign or material things” (4). Further, in *The Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist*, William Wilberforce, another Tractarian, asserts that “Holy Eucharist . . . consist[s] of two parts, different in character, yet united the one to the other; the one an object to the senses, the other made known to us by revelation and faith” (119). In other words, the Eucharist is made of two unified parts: matter (the physical bread and wine) and the spirit (the presence of Jesus Christ).

Rossetti herself refers to the Real Presence. In *Time Flies*, she writes:

> He puts His Spirit within us, reviving, moulding, beautifying us: He renews in our hearts His perfect law: He feeds us with His own Body and Blood: He guides us with His counsel, and after that (if so be we persevere) He will receive us with glory. (244)

Like Keble and Wilberforce, Rossetti’s language reflects a belief in Real Presence: “He feeds us with His own Body and Blood” and the action is present tense, the “Spirit is within us.” In other words, the sacrament of the Eucharist is not done in memory of what has happened before; instead, the same Spirit of renewal is available now to those receiving the bread and wine. This perspective on the Eucharist can be closely aligned with the Early Church Fathers’ concept of theosis, the complete union of humans with God. In other words, the Eucharist has a “theosis effect” (Gerakas 87), which means “when we receive Holy Communion worthily and regularly, that which we receive, the living Christ, becomes fructified, becomes a part of us, remains with us, blossoms, bears fruit and returns to its infinite source” (87). Again, there is a progression of the soul here, which necessitates a regular consumption of the Eucharist. The end goal is full union
with God. In the meantime, the Eucharist makes available the Living-Christ now. The partaker is able to assimilate the Logos and become more and more like the Christ each time.

In Rossetti’s narrative poem “Goblin Market,” there is a Eucharistic-exchange between the two sisters, which encompasses some of the main elements of the Anglo-Catholic Eucharist. The sisters encounter dangerous goblin men on the way to the marketplace and the goblin men call out to the sisters and insist that they “come buy [their] orchard fruits” (3). As the story continues, Laura makes a crucial mistake; she ignores Lizzie’s warning not to “peep at goblin men” (49). While Lizzie covers her eyes (50), Laura steals a glance at the goblin men and eventually buys the fruit for the price of a “golden curl” (125) and, then, of course, eats of the fruit. Consequently, Laura falls ill and so Lizzie returns to the goblin men to retrieve the antidote for Laura’s illness, which is, paradoxically, the juice of the goblin fruit. In other words, the fruit that made Laura ill will, in turn, make her well in a miraculous feat of love and sacrifice performed by her sister Lizzie.57 At this point in the narrative, Laura is at the centre of the spiral of the soul journey: eating the goblin fruit has sent her in a downward spiral. Like her friend Jeanie, Laura is cast into despair. She is unable to perform any of her daily tasks; she is “listless” (297) and she “would not eat” (298). Laura longed after the goblin fruit and could think of no other pleasure. At this point she could wither and die, like Jeanie, or experience a

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57 Humphries, in “Christina Rossetti’s ‘Goblin Market’ and Bunyan’s Orchard of Beelzebub,” notes a similar feature of the fruit in “Goblin Market.” He says the fruit can be likened to the fruit of the merchants in Revelation 18 and, in this way, represent “destructive worldly pleasure” (49). He also acknowledges the fruit’s “double power” as it can be “either destructive or beneficial-depending on whether it is offered by the goblins or by Lizzie, and on whether it is consumed for selfish pleasure or for selfless love” (49). Further, Humphries asserts that “the consumption of substances which could become either poisons or cures was by no means inconceivable in nineteenth-century England [and] Christina Rossetti herself consumed such substances. . . the liturgy for the Church of England tell[s] of the bread and wine that can have the power sometimes to bring life, sometimes to bring death” (“The Uncertainty of Goblin Market” 392).
soul-transformation and begin the ascent up the spiral again. Like the speaker in Rossetti’s “From House to Home,” a heavenly intervention is needed. Laura cannot save herself. Lizzie will become the expression of the Living-Christ in Laura’s life. She will become the Eucharist that will save Laura’s soul from sin and death. The moment of communion between the two sisters is summarized in these lines:

She cried “Laura,” up the garden,

“Did you miss me?

Come and kiss me.

Never mind my bruises,

Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices

Squeezed from goblin fruits for you,

Goblin pulp and goblin dew.

Eat me, drink me, love me;

Laura, make much of me:

For your sake I have braved the glen

And had to do with goblin merchant men.” (464-74)

This passage is certainly the climactic moment in “Goblin Market.” The exchange between the two sisters is rapturous, passionate, and erotic and is one example of how Rossetti uses the “erotic body as a vehicle for salvation” (Hill 455). Hill suggests that “Rossetti is using the body not as a symbol or metaphor but rather as the concrete

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58 This utterance in particular has led to much speculation about Rossetti’s sexuality and Victorian women’s sexuality in general. Feminist critics in the 1970s, like Germaine Greer, popularized the view that Goblin Market’s “fairy-tale form . . . was a mere facade used to mask the poet’s ‘deeply perverse’ subject, which included unconscious expressions of infantile sexuality and lesbian desire” (Kooistra 245-47). Other critics, like Kooistra, are critical of such speculation, but also acknowledge that Rossetti’s popular culture revival of Rossetti’s writing during the sexual revolution of the 1960s onward was directly influenced by the provocativeness of Goblin Market. In fact, Rossetti’s Goblin Market was considered so erotic that an illustrated version of the poem appeared in Playboy magazine in 1973 (Kooistra 242).
conduit through which humans understand God. In other words, for Rossetti, humans do not so much transcend the body as they experience the transcendent through it” (456).

From Hill’s perspective, the bodily exchange between Laura and Lizzie illustrates that the Eucharist is not a symbol of the reality of God, but a conduit through which this reality happens. Lizzie’s body becomes the communion bread and wine; she says “Eat me, drink me, love me” (Rossetti “Goblin Market” 471). Lizzie is a Christ figure, her body is broken and given as the saving cure for Laura. Lizzie’s body is taken and given, just as the host in the Communion service.

Further, in Rossetti’s poem “A Better Resurrection,” 59 the speaker is resuscitated by the same power that saved Lizzie from the poison of the goblin men. The religious language in this poem is more obvious than “Goblin Market,” but if we align the last line of this poem, “O Jesus drink of me” with Lizzie’s famous words to her sister, “Eat Me, Drink Me, Love Me,” there are obvious similarities. “A Better Resurrection,” although brief compared to the long narrative poems “Goblin Market” and “From House to Home,” compacts the idea of a soul journey leading to theosis, or complete union with God, into three stanzas. Part of this union with God, according to the early Church Fathers, is to “offer ourselves as nothing, that is empty, then we can be filled with Him who is all” (Gerakas 86). The first lines of “A Better Resurrection” illustrate a speaker who has come to the end of herself. She cries out: “I have no wit, no words, no tears; / My heart within me like a stone” (1-2). She has come to the end of her own understanding and she finds herself without language or ability to express her emotion. There is a desperation to these lines, but she does not end in despair. Her lament is indeed a call for help; she cries out:

I lift mine eyes, but dimmed with grief

59 Notably, “A Better Resurrection” appears in the same volume of poetry that “Goblin Market” and “From House to Home” appear in, *Goblin Market and Other Poems (1862).*
No everlasting hills I see;
My life is in the falling leaf:

O Jesus, quicken me. (5-8)

The speaker is blind with sorrow and in search of a cure. There is a slow descent, a downward direction in these lines, pronounced by the “falling leaf,” which places the speaker in the autumn, a descent toward winter or toward death. Yet, even in the descent toward death, the speaker utters these words: “O Jesus, quicken me” (8). It appears, when all else has failed, even one’s own ability to hope, the same power that resurrected Jesus from the dead is available to those that call on his name.

The second stanza reiterates this slow descent toward winter and emptiness. She has now progressed from a “falling leaf” (7) to a “faded leaf” (9). The decomposition process has begun. Winter begins to set in: “My harvest has dwindled to a husk” (10). She, in fact, has become completely empty; her “life is void” (11) and the speaker has fully descended into winter: “My life is like a frozen thing, / no bud nor greenness can I see:” (13-14). But in her cryogenic state, she calls on the name of Jesus: “O Jesus, rise in me” (16). The word “rise,” like “quicken,” suggests the resurrection power of Christ. The speaker’s soul is experiencing winter, but with winter comes the promise of spring, of new life, or, in the context of the liturgical calendar, the promise of Easter. Again, there is a call to “rouse” (“February 12” Time Flies 3) one’s soul and “hope afresh” (5).

In the third stanza, the speaker continues to descend into emptiness toward death. She cries: “My life is like a broken bowl, / A broken bowl that cannot hold / One drop of water for my soul” (17-19). She is broken; her soul is parched and desperate, but all is not lost. The repetition of the long “o” sound emphasizes the emptiness of the speaker, but like in the soul journey and the Communion liturgy, this descent into emptiness is essential for the soul to be ready to receive the fullness of Christ. First, the speaker must
experience a form of death: “Cast in the fire the perished thing” (21). Through the fire the soul is remade: “Melt and remould it, till it be / A royal cup for Him my King:” (22). The soul is being remade, not destroyed. Again, there is evidence of a soul-progression. Her heart of “stone” (2), which denotes an inability to feel empathy or compassion, is being remade into a vessel that is worthy of Jesus to drink from. If thought of in terms of the theosis process, she is being slowly unified and made into the likeness of Christ.

Likewise, the previous petitions of the first and second stanzas for Jesus to quicken her and then rise in her have resulted in a complete transformation of the broken bowl, a vessel that is unusable, into a “royal cup” worthy of a King. This leads us to the petition in the final line of the poem: “O Jesus, drink of me” (24). Again, the speaker calls to Jesus, this time not to receive anything from him, but to give her life in return. Thus, this gift completes the communion, which echoes the words of departure after the communion service: “Ye are dearly bought, therefore glorify God in your bodies, and in your spirits, for they belong to God. Be you followers of God, as dear children, and walk in love, even as Christ loved us, and gave himself for us an offering and a Sacrifice of a sweet savour to God” (The Book of Common Prayer Keeling 221). In other words, now that the person has received the gift of communion, which is the power of God manifest in the bread and wine, they are to take their gift of renewed life and energy and give out of their abundance. The departing words call the congregates to “walk in love” and give freely to the people around them. In this way, by receiving God in the Eucharist, the

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60 Biblical examples of fire purifying the soul include the prophet Malachi, who writes: “But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness” (Malachi 3.2-3).
receiver slowly becomes like Christ and like Lizzie: a living sacrifice ready to be given as an offering in word and deed to the community.61

3.4 The Liturgy and Community

This pattern of receiving and then giving mirrors the pattern of receiving God's Word in daily liturgical prayer then responding by sharing the Word with others in community. Essentially, for Rossetti, hospitality is related to her own personal communion with God. Rossetti fed her spirit with daily worship and liturgical readings, which she saw as the “daily bread” of The Lord’s Prayer. I contend that Rossetti’s life and work emulates the opening lines of this prayer: “Our Father, who art in heaven. Hallowed by thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Mathew 6.9-10). Rossetti’s writing, rather than a retreat into depressive individualism, is a reflection of her heavenly vision of hope and hospitality: the gifts of communion—words of love and hope, bread, and wine—shared in community.

Importantly, from Rossetti’s participation in a common liturgy, which promotes community rather than individuation, emerges writing that demonstrates this ideal of community.62 For instance, Rossetti not only participated in a daily liturgy, but she also created new devotionals. Rather than serve as a private mythology, these devotional books were Rossetti’s way of reaching out to other community members. In fact, Rossetti, in the last twenty years of her life, produced six volumes of devotional prose.63 As D’Amico explains, in a time that Victorian discourse concerning religion

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61 Similarly, Gerekas asserts that “the Eucharist then is not merely food for our soul but strengthens us and prompts us to perform charitable works for those in need and in this process we imitate God and become more and more like Him” (87).
62 My argument forms partially from Dieleman’s argument that the “Anglican Service . . . impressed upon participants a deep sense of community” (119).
63 Rossetti’s devotional oeuvre consists of six books of devotional prose including: Annus Domini: A Prayer for Each Day of the Year, Founded on a Text of Holy Scripture (1874); Seek and Find: A Double Series of Short Studies of the Benedicite (1879); Called to be Saints: The Minor Festivals Devotionally Studied (1881); Letter and Spirit: Notes
“shifted to give preponderance to doubt” (Lance St. John Butler qtd. in D’Amico
Christina Rossetti: Faith, Gender, and Time 147) Rossetti “resisted this shift entirely . . .
during this time her vocational life and spiritual life blended completely” (147). Palazzo
echoes D’Amico’s assertion; she says, “In Time Flies small homely rituals become
opportunities for learning wisdom in our relationships with one another and the rest of
the material world. Spiritual life grows out of daily interaction with one another in the
world, and spiritual lessons are not learnt in isolation” (141). Time Flies is one example
of how Rossetti participates in the breaking of bread, God's Word, in community. She is
both receiving and giving nourishment, in Palazzo's word, wisdom (skill for living); in
this way, Rossetti's responsive act of writing devotionals is encircled in her relationship
to community, which I see as including her church and family, and certainly, her readers.

Moreover, Rossetti’s devotional prose was influenced by a long tradition of
devotional writing and reflects her belief in the Communion of Saints. Her interaction
with the historical devotional texts is directly influenced by the Anglo-Catholic
community, as Ludlow explains:

Rossetti enters into dialogue with the practical theology of Tractarianism . . .
and retracts] the individualist enterprise that, she perceives, imprisons
individuals in the material dimensions of the world and alienates them from
the Communion of Saints

. . . [Rossetti engaged] with classics that include Augustine’s Confessions
(398 CE), Thomas à Kempis’s The Imitations of Christ (c. 1418-27), George
Herbert’s The Temple (1633) and John Bunyan’s The Pilgrim’s Progress
(1678). (9)
Rossetti’s writing reflects a connection with devotional writers as early as Augustine in the fourth century to Bunyan in the seventeenth century, whom she sees as part of the Communion of Saints. Rossetti’s influences were not confined to one religious tradition or a particular time. In fact, her writing reflects what Ludlow describes as “[an] investment in the interface between worship and writing; it also reveals her commitment to the doctrine of Apostolic Succession and to the past and present interpretive community in which she believes the Bible is best encountered and personhood understood” (9). In other words, Rossetti, through the act of reading, has a relationship with the Communion of Saints, but the relationship is not one-sided; Rossetti contributes to the dialogue in her own responsive act of writing.

Further, because of Rossetti’s intimate and on-going relationship with the Communion of Saints, her writing becomes more than simple imitation or mimesis of the previous works, including scripture and other devotional writing. Rossetti’s writing is more than mimesis; it is more closely aligned with the act of anamnesis: simply put, to “remaster.” Susan Johnston explains anamnesis in this way: “To re-master. . . is more than to remake; it is to make anew the original, . . . to improve the quality, to address what has been lost or marred by the passing of time [and] such remastery does not merely commemorate; it remembers, makes whole again, an experience before the fact of its commodification” (274). Viewed through the lens of anamnesis, Rossetti’s devotional writing remasters the previous text and, in doing so, brings the past forward into the present time. Anamnesis, then, is more than an act of remembrance; in anamnesis, the text is made alive again for a new audience. For Rossetti’s contemporaries, her poems and devotionals made the bible and the historic devotional writing more accessible, perhaps more digestible. Also, Rossetti’s writing presents the reader with a tapestry of biblical allusion and devotional writers of the past, which is
designed to engage the reader in an ongoing conversation. In this way, Rossetti is building community by building a bridge from the past to the present by remastering these texts for a contemporary audience.

Rossetti’s Anglo-Catholic liturgical practice, which included daily liturgical readings and regular participation in the Communion Liturgy, cultivated a posture of hope visible in Rossetti’s writing. The hope Rossetti promotes is a supernatural hope, based on the Anglo-Catholic belief that Christ’s first resurrection is evidence that all believers will too experience resurrection after death. Rossetti warns against despair, the opposite to hope, and also presumption, which keeps one from following Christ in obedience. Sustained liturgical practices, for Rossetti, were essential for changing the heart from a place of hostility toward God, to a place that welcomes God with hospitality. Hospitality of the heart is needed for an effective soul journey as the journey is about continually progressing toward theosis or union with God. The Sacrament of the Eucharist is for preparation and practice of this union. Rossetti’s writing illustrates the power of the Eucharist to renew one’s hope and transform one’s soul into the likeness of Christ; thus, her writing contributes to the liturgical training of the soul, which prepares the body and soul for future resurrection into glory.
CHAPTER FOUR: “On Earth as it is in Heaven”:
Keeping Time with the Divine Rhythm in Christina Rossetti's Daily Devotional *Time Flies*

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will consider how Rossetti remasters the Jesus narrative from birth to death to ascension into a liturgical devotional. This liturgical devotional, I suggest, continues Rossetti’s outreach to her Victorian audience and offers to them a way of patterning their lives after God’s time rather than the “industrial time.” Rossetti is presenting her pattern-for-living, based on Anglo-Catholic liturgy, the bible, and other devotional works, to a wider audience. Furthermore, I assert that this pattern-for-living is not only to refocus her busy and distracted readers on God, but to prepare them for their soul’s final destination. For Rossetti the larger vision for her devotional works was to prepare souls to receive the grace of God and also, one day, enter into heavenly realms of God’s full presence, the ultimate theosis.

The soul journey is a journey through time and Rossetti’s understanding of this journey is directed by the liturgical calendar. With the patterns of the liturgy in mind, Rossetti's daily devotional *Time Flies: A Reading Diary* engages with the convention made popular by John Keble's *The Christian Year*. Daily devotionals like *Time Flies* and *The Christian Year* were created to counter-balance the hectic days typical of a nineteenth-century person following “industrial time” (Lysack “The Productions of Time” 453). As Lysack notes, Keble’s *The Christian Year* and Rossetti’s *Time Flies* (and other devotions that followed the liturgical calendar) “reworked familiar ground” (453),
building on the precedent set by the Book of Common Prayer (1549), which followed the pattern set by the “early and medieval Christian practice, including the canonical hours” (453). For this reason, I conclude that Rossetti was not intending to reinvent a well-established way of prayer and devotion. Instead, I contend, Rossetti was remastering the liturgical year, an act of anamnesis, for her nineteenth-century readership. Rossetti was certainly concerned with what Lysack notes as the blending of “liturgical time and industrial time” to the point that “these two temporal orders came in this period to resemble one another” (453). By the nineteenth-century, the busyness of the mechanized rhythms of London (and beyond) had changed the way the average person experienced time itself. Furthermore, ruptures in the scientific and philosophic understanding of time caused by works such as Charles Lyell's Principles of Geology created a sizeable tension between religion and science. Rossetti's Time Flies, I will argue, meets the tension of these ruptures head on. Instead of converting to industrial time, Time Flies maintains the patterns of liturgical time, which, like the rituals of the Anglo-Catholic liturgy, allowed for readers, through repetition, to dwell in the patterns of relationship with God and with community. In this way, she is focusing her readership on living an intentional and fruitful soul journey.

4.2 Living out the Liturgical Year in Time Flies

Christina Rossetti's Time Flies: A Reading Diary, being short Devotional Essays for every day in the year was first published in 1885,64 Rossetti's fifty-fifth year, by The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK). SPCK was founded by Thomas Bray and has been operating as an Anglican mission agency since 1698

64 Time Flies “sold seven thousand copies” and as D’Amico notes, “both men and women were buying these works” (Faith, Gender, and Time 148).
SPCK published Rossetti’s six devotional books and her collection of poems *Verses* (Kent & Stanwood 401). As such, Rossetti's *Time Flies*, like the other devotional books, is directed toward a specialized audience, Anglican and Anglo-Catholic participants who are likely familiar with the liturgical calendar, the *Book of Common Prayer*, and all the corresponding feast and fast days. Again, *Time Flies* follows in the wake of the popularity of John Keble's *The Christian Year* and Lysack explains that for the nineteenth-century audience, devotionals that follow liturgical time “offered themselves as reading objects that were tailored to the time-sensitive reader, accommodating liturgical time to the more daily and urgent demands of clock time and the routine of the work week (“Productions of Time” 458). In Lysack’s view, Rossetti intentionally created *Time Flies* in response to her readers’ need for an efficient devotional practice. Rossetti uses the time wisely in *Time Flies*. She is aware of the limited attention span and the time constraints of her readers and she uses the familiar format of the liturgical calendar to invite the reader to take time to weave the pattern of the liturgy into their lives.

*Time Flies* is a compilation of short essays, poems, and prayers, each structured within the liturgical and seasonal rhythms of the year. Within the structure of the liturgical calendar, *Time Flies* manages to feel personal—and, I suggest, even today, contemporary in its themes and concepts, thus reaching beyond the nineteenth-century...

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65 SPCK is still in operation three hundred years later. The mission of SPCK, according to their website, is to “promote Christian ideas and values; [they] do this by publishing, and supporting the publishing of, books and resources for people for people of all denominational and faith backgrounds” (spckpublishing.co.uk/About/Mission).

66 D’Amico notes that Rossetti’s devotional works were read by “Anglican vicars... and occasionally [they] drew upon her teachings for sermons” (148). Further, D’Amico suggests that Rossetti’s devotionals were “well received by members of the Methodist Church” (148).

67 In the same vein, D’Amico argues that *Time Flies* is an expression of a mature Rossetti who desired to create a devotional work that appeals to all “seeking spiritual solace and guidance” (*Christina Rossetti: Faith, Gender, and Time* 160).
Anglican audience with its timeless message of God's love and mercy. Furthermore, *Time Flies* demonstrates the full spectrum of Rossetti's literary and theological powers. D'Amico observes that “[w]ith *Time Flies*, Rossetti fully enters a new phase in her poetic career. . . she becomes a poet who not only sighs, longing for God, but also one who sings, both accepting the pattern of her life as God's will and looking forward to the joy of heaven” (*Christina Rossetti: Faith, Gender, and Time* 159-60). In other words, *Time Flies* demonstrates Rossetti’s spiritual maturity or her own progression in the soul journey. By the time of publication, she would have experienced the downward spiral of sorrow with the loss of her sister, Maria, in 1876, and her brother, Dante, in 1882, as well as her own battle with Grave’s disease. While the repetitiveness of her text might suggest stasis, I suggest that *Time Flies* explores the downward spiral of loss and sorrow but through the perspective of supernatural hope, which results, as D’Amico says, in a song directed toward God that also leads others toward God.

The poetry in *Time Flies* often resembles the meter and form of a song, which can be compared to a children's verse. However, the meter and repetition, often likened to a nursery rhyme, in my view, is not for entertaining children. The repetition in Rossetti’s verse invites the reader to dwell in the familiar Christian narrative of the liturgical year and also carry the verse with them throughout the day. In fact, Rossetti uses repetition as a way of subverting the mechanized notions of industrial time in that she turns the repetition into a type of prayer similar to incantation. Also, within the framework of liturgical time, the reiteration of certain phrases and words will direct the reader along the path of the soul journey, especially if they return to the readings daily and year after year. Therefore, the repetition in *Time Flies* functions on two levels: at the sentence level, by repeating certain words and phrases, and also at a structural level by
following the liturgical year, which reiterates the feast and fast days of the Anglo-Catholic liturgy.

Throughout *Time Flies*, Rossetti emphasizes certain holy days. For instance, in the appendix to the main volume of entries (dated January 1st to December 31st) are additional “readings for certain movable holy days” (*Time Flies* 254). Here, Rossetti supplements the yearly readings with thirty-three additional readings that focus on the season from Advent, through Lent, to Ascension and Whitsuntide, to the beginning of Trinitytide. Rossetti's supplemental readings focus her readers’ attention on the full cycle of the liturgical year. For instance, she sums up the whole liturgical cycle in her entry for “Trinitytide: Ember Wednesday,” writing:

> Advent bids us look forward and upward, for “Behold, the Bridegroom cometh.” Lent turns our eyes backward and inward, for except we repent we shall all likewise perish. Whitsuntide calls on us to seize the actual moment; open our hearts wide and be filled. With Whitsun Day and its “equal” octave Trinity Sunday, our series of exceptional calls and celebrations of particular Divine Mysteries ends or is suspended: is suspended for any who survive till another Advent, is ended for all who survive not. Trinitytide is a prolonged period wherein to bring forth fruit with patience. All the great things done for us, and revealed to us, ought to have led us up to a simple, earnest, unflagging fulfilment of everyday duties. (277-78)

This entry, the third to last entry in the Appendix of *Time Flies*, prepares the reader for the long season of ordinary time (Trinitytide) that stretches through the summer months and ends with the coming of the new liturgical year at the end of November. Further, Rossetti reminds us that Advent is a season of waiting. The participant is called to anticipate the return of Christ, the bridegroom. Advent, then, calls for the reader to pause
from busyness of everyday life and maintain an “forward and upward” (277) posture through the four weeks leading up to the drama of the nativity. Also, this concentrated time of waiting to receive the Christ as an infant prepares the soul-journeyer to expect the second appearance of Christ as the Bridegroom, who will one day reunite with his bride, the church.

Lent, Rossetti recalls, is a time of personal reflection, repentance, and inner transformation. The posture here is an inner focus, which mirrors the downward turn in the soul journey structure. As the pilgrim travels upward through the season of Easter to Ascension and finally to the season of Whitsuntide, or Pentecost, Rossetti reminds the reader to pause, and receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit: “open our hearts wide and be filled” (278). She asserts that the filling of the Holy Spirit, celebrated each Whitsuntide, is necessary in order to endure the long season of Trinitytide. Further on in the entry, she continues: “For if ordinary lives at ordinary times are liable to become monotonous, tedious, lax, not least so are their lives” (278). She warns her reader that the mundane days of ordinary time are difficult and arduous, but finishes this passage with an encouraging benediction: “God grant to them and to ourselves that loving faith which can do all things in Christ's strength” (278). Rossetti acknowledges the mundane, often repetitive days of modern life, but cultivates supernatural hope by focusing her readers on Christ. She assures them that the liturgical feast and fast days, if adhered to in practice, provide enough of God's strength to travel through the difficult days of daily life.

Again, Rossetti recognizes the need to offer a road map for pilgrims to travel the liturgical year so that they translate the arduous and monotonous days of daily living from empty repetition into spiritual ritual. This pattern for daily living is modelled after the footsteps of the Apostles and, most importantly, after the Incarnate God, Jesus of
The start of the liturgical year, the season of Advent, is the anticipation of the Incarnate God who first appears as an infant in the celebration of the nativity. Further, the season of Advent is about waiting for the second appearance of Jesus Christ.

Rossetti's view of Advent was influenced by the writings of the Tractarians, who penned *Tracts for the Times.* One of these tracts sums the season of Advent in this way:

The name Advent, which means Coming, is given to the four Sundays immediately before Christmas-day, the feast which celebrates our LORD’S coming in the flesh to suffer for us. This season, then, is set apart by the Church. . .for welcoming, with more devout and heartfelt joy, that great day, the day of CHRIST’S Nativity. But her services at this solemn time are also directed to another object, very closely connected with the former: viz. to lead our thoughts onward to that second coming of our LORD and Master ‘in His glorious Majesty to judge the quick and the dead,’ which the Church is still expecting and anxiously looking for. (“Number 16: Advent” *Tracts for the Times* 1)

Advent, then, for the Tractarians, as well as for Rossetti, is a celebration of Christ's first arrival as the child of Mary and Joseph and, also, an anticipation of the second coming of Christ. Advent sets the stage for the coming liturgical year where the participant is remembering the past and anticipating the future, but in present time. By repeating this

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68 In an advertisement that prefaces the *Tracts for the Times,* John Henry Newman writes: “The following Tracts were published with the object of contributing something towards the practical revival of doctrines, which although held by the great divines of our Church, at present have become obsolete with the majority of her members, and are withdrawn from public view even by the more learned and orthodox few who still adhere to them” (“Advertisement” 1). The *Tracts,* then, were intended to educate the members of the Anglican faith, specifically of the doctrines that, as Newman says are, “obsolete” or forgotten among the members. Some of the doctrines that the *Tracts* sought to return are: the importance of “Apostolic succession,” the true nature of the “sacraments” as a source of “Divine Grace,” and the meaning of liturgical festival days (“Advertisement” 1).
same pattern over and over, the Incarnate, who is past, present, and future, becomes part of the reality of the reader's daily life.

Again, Rossetti's liturgical poetry invites the reader to experience the Incarnate God, the eternal, divine presence who enters into our temporal time and touches humanity by becoming human. One of the ways Rossetti's poetry makes this relationship possible is that she repeats familiar images and themes from the Gospel stories. For instance, in celebration of the Advent season and Advent's pinnacle of celebration, Christmas, she writes:

Love came down at Christmas,
Love all lovely, Love Divine,
Love was born at Christmas,
Star and Angels gave the sign.
Worship we the Godhead,
Love Incarnate, Love Divine,
Worship we our Jesus, —
But wherewith for sacred sign?
Love shall be our token,
Love be yours and love be mine,
Love to God and all men,
Love the universal sign. (“December 29” *Time Flies* 1-12)

Rossetti’s “Love Came Down at Christmas” first appeared in *Time Flies* as a December 29 entry. The poem appears again in *Verses* as part of the series of liturgical poems, titled “Christmastide” (*Verses* 56). At first glance, like so many of Rossetti’s poems, “Love Came Down at Christmas” is simply constructed and the word Love, which is repeated 11 times in 13 lines, is an example of this repetitive structure that Rossetti
favours throughout *Time Flies*. Further, the meter is mostly regular trochaic trimeter, which is easily sung and memorized, much like a nursery song. In fact, “Love Came Down at Christmas” has survived into modern times as a popular hymn and was most recently recorded in 2007 by “Jars of Clay,” a contemporary, alternative Christian rock band. I view this as evidence of Rossetti’s lyrical genius and ability to translate deep, spiritual truths into words that are universally appealing and stand the test of time.

Rossetti’s poem “Love Came Down at Christmas” distills the essentials of the Christmas narrative and adapts the Christmas story for a late-nineteenth century audience. The first line, “Love Came Down at Christmas” (1), is the annunciation, conception, and birth of the Christ condensed in five simple words, which is an example how Rossetti’s poetry appears simplistic on the surface, but, at the same time, calls for the reader to pause over each word and unwind the familiar narrative of the Christmas nativity. "Love Came Down,” refers to the Angel Gabriel visiting the young woman Mary. In Luke's Gospel, Mary accepts the invitation to conceive the Christ child and immediately runs to her cousin Elizabeth’s home. In chapter two of Luke, the curtain opens on the young woman and her family anticipating the arrival of the child, and traveling to the town of Bethlehem for the mandatory census. They find room in a stable and Mary gives birth to the Christ child. Therefore, Mary's pregnancy, the waiting, is built into the opening line of this poem, which reflects the “forward and upward” (*Time Flies* 277) posture of the liturgical rhythm purposed by Rossetti later in *Time Flies*. After the child arrives “at Christmas” (1), Rossetti reminds us that the child is both fully human and fully God. For instance, in the line “Love all lovely, Love Divine” (2), Rossetti chooses lovely, an ambiguous descriptor, but easily a word associated with an infant. She then pairs the subtle, almost benign word, with “Divine” (2), which, of course, reminds us that the child is the Incarnate God. Also, the incantation of the word
love in these lines makes clear to the reader that the gift of the Christ child was indeed a love gift from the Father.

The poem then further unwinds the Christmas narrative from Luke with the line, “Stars and Angels Gave the Sign” (4), which is Luke’s vignette of the shepherds’ encounter with the heavenly hosts that proclaim the birth of the Christ. Rossetti’s God is a God of Love, a God who “comes down” and is amongst the people and thus a God who desires a relationship with us humans. Yet, she reminds us that Christ is indeed God and that He deserves to be revered, writing: “Worship we the Godhead / Love Incarnate, Love Divine” (5-6). She reiterates that Jesus is a “sacred sign” (7), a “token” (8) of the Father’s love. She saw God as a God for all humankind: “Love to God and all men / Love the universal sign” (11-12). Rossetti’s final words of “Love Came Down” reflect the message of the Angels to the shepherds in Luke’s Gospel: “And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2.13-14). Again, the season of Advent sets the stage for the rest of the liturgical year. For Rossetti, it is in Advent that we begin the posture of waiting and watching for the appearance of the living God, who is a loving Father and is present in our everyday lives.

Building on the celebration of the arrival of the Christ child on Christmas day is the season of Christmastide, which is twelve days, then Epiphany (January 6) follows, which is the celebration of the visitation of the Magi. Rossetti acknowledges the “Feast of Epiphany” in Time Flies with a dialogical poem that depicts the narrative of the Magi visitation. The speakers in the poem are the Magi themselves in dialogue with another speaker who interprets the symbols of Epiphany and answers the Magi's questions. Through the conversation between the three Magi and the fourth speaker, a tension
between the spiritual and the physical is established. Roe, in her book *Christina Rossetti’s Faithful Imagination*, makes a similar observation.

Rossetti's devotional poetry often is created and sustained by seeming contradiction. The earthly and the spiritual are at odds, yet both come from God. Thus nature, earthly yet filled with spirit, becomes not only a metaphor for man but also an allegory of language. As man can seek to perceive the divine in nature, so too can he seek divine meaning in earthly words. (14)

The Epiphany poem is imbued in the “seeming contradiction” of matter and spirit, which, as Roe explains, becomes an “allegory of language” or as John, the Gospel writer explains: “And the Word became flesh and dwelled among us” (John 1:14). Therefore, a dialogue that explores the symbolic meaning of the physical gifts of Epiphany becomes a fitting form to explore this tension.

The tension between matter and spirit begins with the mystery of God's choice to “come down” into weakness, even powerlessness. The first Magus asks:

“Lord Babe, if Thou art He
We sought for patiently,
Where is Thy court?
Hither may prophecy and star resort;
Men heed not their report.” — (“January 6” 1-5)\(^{69}\)

The paradox of power is established in the Magus’ address to “Lord Babe” (1). The new King is both a powerful “Lord” (1) and a helpless child, “Babe” (1). The Magus, who knows the prophesy of the coming King, asks the question: “Where is Thy Court?” (3). His vision is myopic; he assumes that the prophesied King must already have physical “court” or kingdom. Fittingly, the response is: “Bow down and worship, righteous man: /

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\(^{69}\) This Epiphany poem is taken from the main entries (“January 6”) in *Time Flies* and not from the 33 in the appendix.
This Infant of a span / Is He man sought for since the world began” (6-8). The command to “bow down and worship” (5) identifies the child as holy, powerful, and establishes that, indeed, the child is the King of the Magi's prophesy. The child, who is God, has been present “since the world began” (8). It just happens, in the time and place of the Magi, the eternal God was present as a helpless child.

For the nineteenth-century reader, Rossetti uses this familiar story to emphasize the paradox of power to prepare them for the rest of the liturgical journey, which eventually leads to Jesus’ suffering and death on a cross. In fact, she foreshadows the crucifixion later in the Epiphany poem; the third Magus laments his gift of myrrh: “But I have only brought / Myrrh” (20-21). An unusual gift to celebrate the birth of a king, myrrh, a burial spice, is used to cover up the stench of decay. Although an odd gift, his offering is referred to as “wise” (25) because “myrrh means sacrifice, / And He that lives, this same is He that dies” (26-27). Notably, Rossetti not only prefigures Good Friday, she also connects the paradox of Jesus’ birth (into powerlessness) to the contradiction of Jesus' death. In this vein, the Magus reacts with another lament: “Then here is myrrh: alas! yea, woe is me / That myrrh befitteth Thee” (28-29). Rossetti captures the intensity of emotion in these lines. The quick, monosyllabic words and highly punctuated lines elevate the meter and highlight the sorrowful tone that this stanza is intended to evoke. Rossetti is setting up the reader for the next stage of the journey, for, after a brief period of time, the Lenten season begins, in which the entire Christian narrative unfolds in a collision of weakness and power.

Again, in the context of the soul journey, the reader is invited to take part in the liturgical drama of the birth and death of Jesus to understand their own soul's journey from birth to death and ultimately to resurrection. Like Jesus’ life story, which is played out through the liturgical year, the soul’s journey is a descent into darkness or suffering
and an ascent into the light or the glory of resurrection and ascension. Lent, then, in the context of the structure of the soul journey, is the descent or, as Rossetti writes: “Lent turns our eyes backward and inward, for except we repent we shall all likewise perish” (*Time Flies* 277). Again, the downward spiral is a time for introspection and prayer. In this way, Lent is an opportunity to look at one’s suffering and death through the perspective of the Easter narrative. In this vein, Rossetti writes: “Only now contemplating death from a wider and wiser view-point, I would fain reverse the order of those feelings: dwelling less and less on the mere physical disgust, while more and more on the rest and safety; on the perfect peace of death, please God” (*Time Flies* 45). In other words, by taking the Lenten journey, and turning inward to cultivate God’s perspective, suffering and even death, is relieved of its “disgust” and one can live in peace knowing that the Easter story does not end at the death on the cross, but at the empty tomb.

Furthermore, Lent is also a time of preparation and practice so that the participant is ready to experience the soul journey to the cross and to resurrection. Again, the soul journey is a “journey in matter through time” (Tucker 222) and as Ratzinger explains in *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, the narrative of Christ’s death and resurrection is the pilgrim’s opportunity to seize the gift of the sacrifice of Christ’s body, given “once and for all” (*Hebrews* 9.28 qtd. in Ratzinger 55). In Ratzinger’s view, which I think is a key point, the “act of giving is in no way just a spiritual occurrence” (56). These liturgical celebrations affect both spirit and matter; Ratzinger continues, “[t]his ‘giving’ on the part of the Lord, in the passivity of his being crucified, draws the passion of human existence into the action of love, and so it embraces all the dimensions of reality—Body, Soul, Spirit, Logos” (56). Here, Ratzinger observes that the relationship of the participant to the liturgy is both spiritual and physical, but it is the Logos (the Word of God [scripture]
and the Word [Christ]) that brings matter and spirit together. To explain further, Ratzinger says, “the pain of the body is drawn into the pathos of the mind and becomes the Yes of obedience [and] time is drawn into what reaches beyond time” (56). In other words, by reenacting the passion narrative through reading or hearing the story again and again, the participant has an opportunity to experience an interior transformation, promoted by an empathetic response to the pain and suffering of the crucifixion story, which, according to Ratzinger, results in an act of the will, or obedience. Further, the reenacting of the passion narrative through works like Rossetti’s *Time Flies* and through the liturgy, time itself is infused with the spiritual or “what reaches beyond time” (56).

Lent and the Easter Season is a time of remembering the past and also anticipating the future resurrection of the dead, while contemplating the present reality of one's own soul journey. In the appendix of *Time Flies*, the Lenten and Easter season make up 14 of the 33 liturgical entries, which demonstrates the importance of this part of the liturgical year. Following Anglo-Catholic tradition, Rossetti begins Lent with an Ash Wednesday prayer in verse asking for the forgiveness of sins:  

My God, my God, have mercy on my sin  
For it is great; and if I should begin  
To tell it all, the day would be too small  
To tell it in. (“Ash Wednesday” 1-4)

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70 Ash Wednesday sets the stage for the Lenten Journey. The participants receive ashes on their foreheads to represent their repentance and God’s forgiveness. This tradition is reflective of the ancient Jewish practice of wearing ashes on the head to symbolize repentance. In the *Book of Common Prayer*, the Epistle Reading from Joel 2 captures the purpose of Ash Wednesday: “Turn you unto me with all your hearts, with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Rent your hearts and not your clothes. Turn you unto the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, long suffering, and of great compassion, and ready to pardon wickedness” (Booty 108). Ash Wednesday calls for an action of repentance on the participant’s part and forgiveness on God’s part.
Rossetti's posture here is one of repentance and humility. As customary, Ash Wednesday is a solemn day where the participant acknowledges their sin and asks for mercy. According to Rossetti, who follows Anglo-Catholic tradition, the time of Lent is for the “performance of duty,” which is a concentrated time of “prayer, fasting, almsgiving” (257). Rossetti, throughout the Lenten entries, emphasizes these principal Lenten duties. She underscores that these tasks “bind us into communion with one another, into the Communion of Saints and the Communion of Saints is fellowship with Christ” (258-9). In other words, Lent is not just an individual soul journey; the journey is with a community of co-journeymers. By participating in the act of fasting, praying, and almsgiving, he or she is acting in one accord with other members of the community as well as those who have gone before them, the Communion of Saints.

In Rossetti's liturgical entries, the Lenten season closes in a series of entries that begins with Palm Sunday and carries throughout Holy Week. Rossetti uses the entry for Palm Sunday to set the tone for the Holy Week entries. In the Palm Sunday entry, the Incarnate God, Jesus, who is introduced in her earlier liturgical poem “Love Came Down,” is now “the goat of the sin offering, slain and consumed” (Time Flies 260). The theme of Rossetti’s Holy Week is the Incarnate God who has become a sacrifice, an atonement for our sins. Rossetti again employs repetition to emphasize the key themes of Holy Week. For instance, “Monday in Holy Week” is cast as a plea from Jesus himself to ponder all he has suffered and ends with the question: “Bitter death I bore for thee, / Bore My cross to carry thee, / And wilt thou have nought of Me?” (Time Flies, 260). Rossetti employs the voice of Jesus himself in this poem and invites the reader to be an active participant in the liturgical year: to listen, to remember, to respond. The final descent is the climatic “Good Friday” poem. Like the Monday of Holy Week poem, the speaker in the poem is more than a bystander to the crucifixion. There is an intimacy
between the speaker and Jesus, who “has grown faint upon the cross” (1). By inviting the reader to intimacy with Jesus and his death, Rossetti potentially pulls the reader down into the depths of their soul (down the spiral). She invites the reader to have an emotional response to the words she writes. Because the narrative is familiar to her readers, the danger is to read quickly through; however, she destabilizes the reader’s expectations by using elevated language and repetition. For instance, she writes:

A sorrow beyond sorrow in Thy look,
The unutterable craving for my soul,
Thy love of me sufficed
To load upon Thee and make good my loss (“Good Friday” 2-5)

The repetition of sorrow emphasizes the gravity of this moment. The sorrow, notably, is visible on Jesus’ face, again bringing the reader into a close encounter with Jesus. The stress is placed on the cross as the ultimate expression of his passion and love, evoked by the words “unutterable craving” (3). In the context of the soul journey, the journey to the cross (down the spiral) is intentional, initiated by God and fulfilled by God. In Rossetti's words, “Thy love of me sufficed” (4), Jesus takes upon himself the speaker's burden and at this point, the speaker can only receive the gift, “make good my loss” (5), which is the turning point in the soul journey. The “Good Friday” poem closes with the earth trembling and covered in darkness: “In face of darkened heaven and earth that shook” (6), which is the climax of the Good Friday story. The speaker remains at the centre of the scene and, in an act of complete surrender, she cries out, “take Thou my whole Heart, O Lord Jesus Christ” (7-8). In this way, the poem becomes a prayer of humility and submission that prepares the soul-journeymer for the next steps, the vigil and then the resurrection.
Continuing with the theme of remastering the familiar Easter narrative to raise an affective response in her readers, Rossetti highlights the intensity of the Easter Vigil and the exuberant Easter celebration. During the vigil, Jesus will take a soul journey of his own to the depths of Hades, while the liturgical participants pause, awaiting his resurrection on Easter morning. Again, she weaves together well-known threads of the Easter story to create the vigil poem, but turns the perspective slightly to include the Angels in the garden near Jesus’ burial tomb. Rossetti uses the familiar Easter narrative, but invites her reader to see the vigil in a different way. Also, the reader is called to experience the emotion of the moment and join the Angels who “cry their cry of love, / Adoring God in His new mystery / Of Love more deep than hell, more strong than death” (“Easter Even” 12-14). At this point in the soul journey the reader is in suspension; he or she is asked to reflect on the journey past before the ascent toward the dawn and the glorious Easter morning.

Rossetti’s “Easter Day” poem is full of joy and excitement. The vigil has ended and it is time to celebrate the resurrection; she writes:

Words cannot utter

Christ His returning: —

Mankind, keep jubilee,

Strip off your mourning,

Crown you with garlands,

Set your lamps burning. (1-5)

Like the Advent poems, there are two events, past and future, that Rossetti celebrates in the Easter poem. One, the return of Christ from the grips of death and also the return of Christ at the end of this age. The readers are called to “strip off” their “mourning”
clothes and adorn themselves in the garments of a bride or bridesmaids\textsuperscript{71} in anticipation of receiving their bridegroom. The change of clothes is symbolic of the change in the soul’s condition and the participant’s emotional state. The language is celebratory and the imagery invites relationship and intimacy between the reader and God through the use of the marriage symbolism.

In the context of the soul journey, the soul is united with the returned Christ and together they begin the ascent to the light. Rossetti's three Easter poems in the liturgical section of \textit{Time Flies} certainly illustrate this ascent into the light. In the “Easter Monday” entry, she draws on the symbolism of the water lily\textsuperscript{72} to explain Resurrection, writing,

A beautiful type of the Resurrection is furnished by a water lily. In the evening the white blossom folds up to sink beneath the water. In the morning it returns about the surface, expands in the air, basks in the sunshine. Its brief night passes in secrecy and purity: its renewed day is full of light. (265)

The image of the white blossom suggests the white, linen cloth in the Resurrection story. Also the colour white signifies purity, a cleansing from sin. Like the white lily’s submersion, the death of Jesus and his descent into hell are surrounded in darkness and mystery. At this point, the only evidence we have of Jesus' transformation from corpse to resurrected body is the white, linen cloth and the Angel proclaiming that Jesus has risen. If this same image is applied to the soul's journey, the transformation is shrouded in mystery as well. Like the lily, the soul “sink[s] beneath the water. . . the brief night passes in secrecy and purity” (265). In the context of the Easter narrative, the sinking of

\textsuperscript{71} The image of the lamps burning echoes the language of the parable of the bridesmaids (Matthew 25:1-10).

\textsuperscript{72} The lily entry in the liturgical section of \textit{Time Flies} is an example of Anthony Harrison's observation in “Rossetti's Devotionalist Ideology” that Rossetti's nature poetry shares elements with Keble and Williams, Pre-Raphaelite paintings and verse, and the works of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Notably, and important for my argument, Harrison argues that “[s]uch intense contemplation of images in nature often results in the religious epiphanies or analogical interpretations of the world” (72-3).
the lily or of the soul into darkness has a purifying effect, just as Jesus’ death on the cross purifies the soul from sin.

As Rossetti prepares her readers to experience the Season of Easter, which concludes in the feast of Whitsun or Pentecost, she intends them to see that death and suffering leads to life and joy. For instance, in the “March 22” entry, which would be read during the Lenten season,\(^\text{73}\) she acknowledges that we are co-sufferers with Christ; she writes: “Christ’s Heart was wrung for me, if mine is sore; / And if my feet are weary, His have bled” (1-2). Rossetti is careful to acknowledge the emotional and physical suffering common to every human and to connect their pain to the agony that Jesus would have experienced during the crucifixion.\(^\text{74}\) Again, the purpose of the Incarnate God reveals itself in the humanity of Jesus. Not only does He suffer as we suffer, His anguish far exceeds the experience of the average person. In this way, Jesus represents the tragic figure whom we are to gaze upon so that we can purge our own negative emotions in an act of catharsis.\(^\text{75}\) In this tragic vein, the poem continues: “If grief be a such a looking-glass as shows / Christ’s Face and man’s in some sort made alike” (7-8). The reader is

\(^{73}\) March 22 is the earliest date for Easter Sunday recorded in the Georgian calendar (1761 and 1818) and April 23 is the latest date (1848) for Easter Sunday to occur (in Rossetti’s time); therefore, this date will always fall within the Lenten season.

\(^{74}\) As many of Rossetti’s biographers note, she experienced great suffering and pain throughout her life and particularly in the last 20 years of her life. She was diagnosed with Grave’s disease in 1872; her beloved sister Maria died in 1876; her brother Dante Gabriel died in 1882 and her mother in 1886. Along with family members, she lost many close companions during this time. Further, in 1892, she was diagnosed with breast cancer and underwent a mastectomy. In August 1893, her cancer returned and she eventually succumbed to her illness on December 29, 1894. Rossetti is writing to readers from first-hand experience. Out of her pain came a ministry of writing that promoted hope and joy through the difficulties of life. As such, William Rossetti notes in his short “Memoir” that prefaces his 1920 publication of her poetry: “As an invalid she had courage, patience, and even cheerfulness” (1).

\(^{75}\) I am thinking in terms of Aristotle’s definition of Catharsis: “Tragedy is a representation of a serious, complete action which has magnitude. . . accomplishing by means of pity and terror the catharsis of such emotions” (Poetics 92). Such catharsis (purging, purification) is possible if the reader is able to experience “pity and terror” by contemplating the tragedy of the crucifixion.
meant to see their own misery reflected in Christ’s face. Yet, like in Jesus' life, the pain has purpose and there is no need to remain in this grievous state: “The grief is pleasure with a subtle taste / Wherefore should any fret, or faint, or haste?” (7-9). She calls the grief “pleasure” (7) because, “grief is not grievous to a soul that knows / Christ comes—and listens for that hour to strike” (11-12). Again, and important to the overall pattern of the soul journey, is that Rossetti views suffering, death, and darkness as a necessary part of the journey. Consequently, in the liturgical section of *Time Flies*, the “Easter Tuesday” poem reads: “Wherefore both life and death grow plain / To us who wax and wane” (11-12). Suggesting that the soul's journey is like the moon's circular journey, Rossetti illustrates that we experience both death and life but, like the moon, that the death always leads to the fullness of life. The season of Lent through Easter is an opportunity for participants to view their own difficult circumstances as the pathway to future joy, and also future glory, in heaven.

Now that the pilgrims on the soul journey have risen to a new life in Christ, they celebrate Easter for the next 50 days, which includes the celebration of Rogation, the season of asking, Ascension, the celebration of Jesus' ascent to the heavens, which leads to Whitsun, or Pentecost and finally Trinitytide or ordinary time. The entries for Rogation and Ascension explore the Temptations of Jesus in the wilderness and give practical wisdom on how her readers are to live their daily lives. Rossetti suggests her readers give thanks for their blessings, and avoid the trappings of the temptations. In the framework of the soul journey, these are the obstacles and barriers that the pilgrim must avoid as he or she ascends up the spiral toward the ultimate goal of heaven. For instance, in her entry for the “Vigil of the Ascension: Rogation Wednesday,” Rossetti states:

*Personal lowliness will be needed, and whereinsoever we are called can therein abide content, and work conscientiously. . . And while we thus refrain*
our souls and keep them low, well may we look up and lift up our heads, for our redemption draweth nigh. The same Jesus Who is gone into heaven, will so come in like manner as the Apostles saw Him go into heaven. (269)

The Ascension entry offers advice for the present time, that is, be content and work with diligence. Also, like the theme of most of the liturgical entries, the entry encourages the readers to keep their eyes heavenward in anticipation of Jesus’ return, which is certainly the theme of Ascension.

Finally, as promised, the pilgrim comes to the celebration of Whitsun and at this stage in the soul journey, he or she celebrates the gift of the Holy Spirit. In the words of the Tractarians, on Whitsunday or the Feast of Pentecost, “we celebrate the fulfillment of our LORD’S parting promise in the descent of the HOLY GHOST, in fire, upon His Apostles, to abide with them, and with His Holy Church, even unto the end of the world” (Tract Number 56). Whitsun, then, is the actualization of Jesus’ promise at Ascension: “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1.8). Rossetti, then, recalls the promise in her “Whitsun Eve” entry and, like the vigil before Easter, she asks her readers to pause and wait for the Holy Spirit to come. She builds the emotional tension in the waiting: “Who cometh? Whom words cannot utter: the / All-holy Almighty Spirit, co-equal with the Father / and the Son, God Blessed forever. Amen” (4-5). They are to receive the Spirit, the “Dove,” (7) with “dove- / like souls” (7-8). They are told to prepare their souls, “bow yourselves before the High God” (9); the posture here is one of reverence and awe and this posture is to demonstrate that they are an “acceptable offering” (12) so that they are ready to receive the gift of “Indwelling” (16) Holy Spirit. Again, in terms of hospitality, they are to prepare their hearts to receive the Holy Spirit as an honoured guest in their home.
Therefore, her readers have the opportunity to prepare for the extraordinary, an intimate encounter with the Holy Spirit. The next entry, the “Whitsun Day” (271-72) poem, is equivalent to the Easter Day poem as it bursts forth from the day of waiting with an intentional delight and expressed joy; she writes:

- At sound as of rushing wind and sight as of fire,
- Lo! flesh and blood made spirit and fiery flame,
- Ambassadors in Christ's and the Father's Name,
- To woo back a world’s desire. (1-4)

The galloping meter and regular rhyme heighten the emotional pull of this poem, which is essential to match the tongues of fire and the howling wind of the Pentecost narrative. As such, Rossetti captures the energy of Pentecost that is required to carry the soul through ordinary time. Also, she unites body (matter) and spirit, “flesh and blood made spirit and fiery flame,” the key movement of the Pentecost story. She makes the Pentecost narrative a present reality; she acknowledges that the purpose of the gift of the Holy Spirit is to make “ambassadors” for Christ, who are set apart and will “woo” others back from the trappings of the world.

### 4.3 Liturgical Practice as Preparation for the Afterlife

In Rossetti’s view, the purpose of following the rhythms of liturgical time is to get back into time with the divine plan of salvation and abundant life on earth, which, for the successful soul-journeyer leads to entry into heaven, or the “New Jerusalem.” Again, Rossetti’s *Time Flies* was created to remind her reader that time on earth is only temporal and that we are to continually anticipate the end of our earthly journeys and the end of time itself. In a poem that reflects a similar theme, she writes:

- Oh knell of a passing time,
- Will it never cease to chime?
Oh stir of the tedious sea,
Will it never cease to be?
Yea, when night and when day,
Moon and sun, pass away.

Surely the sun burns low,
The moon makes ready to go,
Broad ocean ripples to waste,
Time is running in haste,
Night is numbered, and day
Numbered to pass away. (“O knell of a passing time” Verses 1-12)

The first four lines of the poem introduce tension through the speaker’s questions. The speaker wonders if the “knell” (1), the sound of a bell rung at a funeral, will ever “cease to chime?” (2). Indeed, time is already passing; the funeral has already begun, but the speaker has a unique response; she simply asks “will it never cease to chime?” (2). The speaker is anticipating the passing of time. This effect is heightened by the short lines and block stanzas, which force the eye down the page quickly. The alternating trochaic trimeter and tetrameter lines emphasize the first word of each line, adding to the dramatic tone of the short verse. The last metrical foot on the second and fourth lines is cut short with seven beats to the line and each line is end-stopped, which mirrors the cessation of time; just as the meter is cut short, so too will time be cut short. The result of the closed lines and the regular rhyme (aabbcc) contributes to the urgency and the dramatic overtones that the poem is surely meant to provoke.

Furthermore, the imagery is of the cosmos halting to mark the end of time. In a dialogic manner the answer, in response to the question “will it ever cease to be?” (4) is “Yea, when night and when day, / Moon and sun, pass away” (5-6). The very markers of
time for humankind, the sun and the moon, will soon come to an end. I say soon because “surely the sun burns low” (7) and “the moon makes ready to go” (8). These lines in particular reflect the words of the prophet Isaiah as well as the gospel writer Mark, each with a similar apocalyptic vision. For instance, the prophet Isaiah proclaims: “The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory” (Isaiah 60.19). According to Isaiah and echoed in Rossetti’s poem, the sun and the moon and the stars will cease to exist, but that doesn’t seem to matter because there will be no need for their light because the “Lord” will be the light or the glory for the new heaven and earth. Although this fact is not explicit to this particular Rossetti poem, the tension between the anxiety of passing time and also the “joyful hope” of waiting for the new heaven and earth is evident. In other words, the passing of time provokes both fear and hope together, but in the end hope will be fulfilled by the coming of the Lord and His kingdom.

As stated earlier, the purpose of *Time Flies* is to provide a tool for readers to order their daily lives through the framework of the liturgical year and the ritual of reading a daily devotional is part of the preparation for the eternal life. As such, *Time Flies* suggests ways to order the earthly life and also serves as a road map to anticipating the life to come. Also, the external movements of the liturgy or the body going through the motions of reading, reciting, and performing the liturgy are more than external functions. These motions, in fact, when infused with the grace of God and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, are meant to prepare the soul for resurrection. Ratzinger, in “The Body and Liturgy,” explains,

> [there is] [m]uch more required of the body [in the liturgy] than carrying objects around and other such activities. . . The body is required to become
‘capable of resurrection,’ to orient itself toward the resurrection, toward the Kingdom of God, in a word: ‘Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.’

Where God’s will is done, there is heaven, there earth becomes heaven. (176) Ratzinger proclaims that the true nature of the liturgy is through “participation” (171) or, in acting out the rituals, a transformation takes place at the soul level. As shown in the previous chapter, the Anglo-Catholic liturgy of Rossetti’s time was orientated toward ritual and manifestation, which Ratzinger’s words reflect. The ritual of liturgy trains the body for resurrection. In the meantime, the liturgy orients the participant toward the “Kingdom of God” in anticipation (supernatural hope) of the earth becoming heaven.

For Rossetti, the ultimate goal for the soul journey is union with God (theosis) and life on earth is a mere glimpse of the glorious future with God to come. The eschatological discourse of the Tractarians, who influenced Rossetti, promotes a similar viewpoint of the relationship between heaven and earth. In Tract 49, for example, the writer proclaims that the “Church. . . [is a] Visible Spiritual Society, formed by Christ himself; a household over which He has appointed his servants to be stewards and rulers to the end” (2). The church is the “visible” manifestation of the invisible heavenly kingdom. Until the time appointed, the church is to stand in for the coming kingdom.

Furthermore, the Tractarians anticipated the coming judgment of all humankind. In *Hell and the Victorians*, Geoffrey Rowell asserts:

> The eschatology of the early Tractarians may best be understood as the extension to the future life of the emphasis which they place on the doctrine of the Church and the necessity of sanctification. . . [there was an emphasis

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76 D’Amico also asserts that it is “essential to recall that for Rossetti, renunciation of worldly pleasure was only a part of the spiritual journey; the goal was always heaven. Therefore, in reading Rossetti’s poems that urge the reader to renounce the world or to beware the temptations of the world, one must keep in mind her belief in a reward of individual immortality and spiritual joy” (*Christina Rossetti: Faith, Gender, and Time* 64).
on] the communion of saints, [which] led to a gradual acceptance of some kind of purgatory. . . and a sharp awareness that the drama of salvation was set against the ultimate choices of heaven and hell. [The Tractarians] stress[ed] the seriousness of the quest and the holiness which was its precondition. . . [T]here can be no salvation in heaven without preparation on earth. . . After death the soul will be brought face to face with God, and to one who died penitently and believing this will be an admission into the bliss of heaven. The impenitent, on the other hand, will experience only the naked justice of God, untempered with mercy, and Christ himself will tread the winepress of God's wrath. (90-91)

According to Rowell, the Tractarian conceptions of heaven and hell (and likely purgatory) were not figurative or imaginative and life on earth is preparation for the reality of an afterlife. The Tractarians believed that heaven and hell were real places in which a soul can live after it leaves the body. The soul would face the final judgment seat of God and the decision would be made whether the soul would be granted admission into heaven or face the “winepress of God’s wrath,” which is an image that evokes a violent judgement and a separation.

Furthermore, the Tractarians and Rossetti were likely influenced by the New Testament view on the afterlife. For instance, Louis Markos explains in Heaven and Hell: Visions of the Afterlife in the Western Poetic Tradition that Jesus describes Hell as a place of darkness, of weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 25:30), a place where the worm never dies and the fire is never quenched (Mark 9:48) . . . Hell was not originally made to house human beings; rather, it was made to house the rebellious angels who fell along with Satan (Matthew 25:41). (92)
Certainly, in modern-day thinking we are more likely to understand hell as a figurative place. However, from Rossetti’s perspective, hell is a literal and physical place. As D'Amico notes,

> Although Rossetti believed in a merciful and loving God, her comments in *Time Flies* on ‘the bottomless pit,’ a phrase appearing often in the book of Revelation, indicate that because she accepted the doctrine of free will she believes it quite possible that a man or woman might indeed choose their own damnation (*Faith, Gender, and Time* 53).

Hell was a real place in Rossetti’s viewpoint, but, importantly, hell was a “contingent necessity” (“January 15” *Time Flies* 13). Using the words of Genesis 1.1, Rossetti contends that “[i]n the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” Both perfect, and no mention of hell” (12). Hell, Rossetti says, is “Adam’s initial work of production. . . Never had the flame kindled upon him or the smell of fire passed upon him, but for his own free will, choice, and deed” (13). In Rossetti’s view, it was by Adam’s own choice (free will) that “sin, death, and hell” (13) came upon him. In this way, Rossetti maintains the goodness and perfect love of God and blames the fall of man for the existence of hell. She appears to dismiss the idea that hell was created for Satan and the fallen angels: “Satan’s initial work is not on record for us” (13). This last statement contradicts Marko’s assertion that hell was created to house Satan and the angels.

For Rossetti, the earthly soul journey, then, is to prepare the soul to meet its final judgment and this journey was not to be taken lightly, as hell was for her very real. I think Rossetti could not ignore the evidence for the reality of hell in her Anglo-Catholic worldview, and, as such, these images of fire and soul death were woven through her writing. The implication of a literal heaven and hell results in an urgency in Rossetti’s devotional writing. This urgency manifests itself in poetic form and meter, like in the
“Oh knell of passing time” poem. Furthermore, the repetitive phrases in *Time Flies* contribute to the urgency. Also, Rossetti did not shy away from using language that was meant to evoke fear and trembling in her readers. For instance, on “January 22” (18), which is the feast of St. Vincent, she states that “St. Vincent feared not them [his torturers] who could kill the body, and after that had no more that they could do. He [St. Vincent] feared (and let us fear) Him only Who is able to destroy soul and body in hell” (18). Similarly, in the “July 28” (144) entry she warns her readers of Satan’s temptations and his disguises. Rossetti explains how Satan is a “sieve-maker” (144) and how he “can turn what we have not into an exceptionally searching sieve” (144). In other words, if the person is not diligent and does not develop the character necessary to withstand Satan’s deceptions, the self-sifting will instead bring “pride, vanity, self-confidence, contempt... discontent, envy, rebellion” (144). She calls these characteristics “hideous blotches, eating ulcers” (144). But, she says, Satan can “never carry his point and destroy us, unless we first make a covenant with death and an agreement with hell” (144). In other words, hell is not a forgone conclusion, even after Satan’s attacks; in fact, I suggest, Rossetti is interested more in promoting a loving and merciful God than scaring people with hell fire.

In this way, Rossetti counters the visions of hell-fire with visions of heaven and the promise of paradise. Immediately following the “January 15” entry about the reality of hell, Rossetti writes a poem about God, whom she calls Love. She writes,

Love understands the mystery, whereof

We can but spell a surface history

Love knows, remembers: let us trust in Love:

Love understands the mystery. (‘January 16’ 1-4)
I believe Rossetti is anticipating her reader’s response to the previous entry about hell. She provides a remedy for the anxious thoughts that may arise after contemplating the reality of sin, death, and hell. Love is the answer. Love, who is God, “understands the mystery” (1). Rossetti affirms to her reader that Love is the answer to sin and death and instead of relying on their own limited knowledge, she suggests they “trust” (3) in Love, who “understands the mystery” (4). In the same way, Rossetti in the “July 28” entry about Satan’s temptation, urges her reader to see that the “hideous blotches, eating ulcers” or “leprosy” are not always meant for our “peril” (144); in fact, she asserts that what Satan has meant for harm, can be for our good. As in the downward spiral into darkness and suffering in the soul journey structure, the sifting of Satan can bring “to the surface what has lurked within” (144). It is our “desperate” states, Rossetti argues, that cause us to “turn to Christ” and it is Christ who is able to heal the leper and make them clean again (144). Again, the remedy for the sickness of the soul is a relationship with God. In Rossetti’s viewpoint, the Love of God is stronger than the forces of hell; she writes: “Adoring God in His new mystery / Of Love more deep than hell, more strong than death” (Time Flies 264). Certainly, Rossetti’s main message is that the Love of God overcomes sin and death and that the soul journeyer’s hope is in this conquering love.

Rossetti’s daily devotional Time Flies invites the reader to participate in the year-long celebration of God’s love for humankind. The readings are designed to take the reader on a soul journey through the liturgical calendar, and the particular feast and fast days act as sign posts that give direction and instruction to travelers. In this way, Time Flies is a conventional Anglo-Catholic text that supplements the liturgy, but, I suggest, Rossetti accomplishes much more with Time Flies than reiterating convention. Personal narrative, sing-song poetry, and complex theological teachings weave together to both challenge and encourage the reader. As such, Time Flies stands out as a devotional that
would have enhanced the daily lives of its readers by bringing them into time with the Divine Rhythm and also preparing them for the soul’s journey after death.

4.4 Conclusion

I have traced the spiral structure of the soul journey through Rossetti’s poetry, the Anglo-Catholic liturgy, and finally, through the liturgical year in her devotional, *Time Flies*. The spiral structure, I contend, offered Victorians a way to navigate through the difficulties that arose from social and religious upheaval and also through their daily, mundane duties. Rossetti’s devotional aesthetic arises out of a lifetime practice of Anglo-Catholic liturgy, but also a lifetime of reading and scholarly engagement with a variety of literary and religious texts. I separate these categories because in today’s literary studies it seems necessary to do so, just as it seems necessary to separate Rossetti’s writing into religious writing and non-religious writing. As we continue to study Rossetti’s writing through the lens of her religious devotion, I imagine that these categories will become less and less distinct. Rossetti’s legacy, I suggest, for readers and for scholars, is an oeuvre that continues to inspire and to challenge. Looking forward, there is much more that can be done to explore the spiral structure of the soul journey in Rossetti’s writing, particularly in her other devotional prose volumes.
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