A Victorian Architectural Controversy:

Who Was the Real Architect of the Houses of Parliament?

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To
our families in Tokyo and Taipei
in gratitude

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PREFACE

In 1834 the Houses of Parliament (Palace of Westminster) were destroyed in a fire, so that a competition was subsequently held to redesign and rebuild them. The winner of the competition was Sir Charles Barry (1795-1860), whose success can be attributed to the fact that he engaged Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-52), a then yet scarcely known young Catholic architect and Gothic specialist, to act as a "ghost" designer. Their partnership ultimately led to an unprecedented controversy over who was the *bona fide* architect of the New Houses of Parliament. Historians have speculated on exactly how Barry worked with Pugin, using Pugin's diary, existing competition drawings, and letters written by the parties concerned as their sources. One piece of anecdotal evidence suggests that Barry plotted to destroy all traces of Pugin's contribution to the project. Now in the collection of the National Art Library in the Victorian and Albert Museum in London, Pugin's diary clearly indicates that Barry desperately needed Pugin's knowledge and skills, but desired Pugin's hand to remain hidden. However, this hope had to be abandoned when Pugin managed to establish himself as a prominent architect and had no further reason to work in Barry's shadow. Nevertheless, it was not until 1844 that Barry first offered Pugin an official appointment in the Parliamentary project as the Superintendent of wood-carving.

Was Pugin one of many assistants to Barry or the "ghost" designer, the one to whom the credit for being the *bona fide* architect of the greatest monument of the nation executed in the nineteenth century should be given? The obscure role that Pugin had played in the Parliamentary project and his opaque relationship with Charles Barry, the officially commissioned architect of the project, led to the controversy over the real authorship of the Houses of Parliament, which became a matter of public dispute between the two men's families after both men had died.

In 1867, Edward Welby Pugin (1834-1875), architect and son of Augustus W. N. Pugin, published a pamphlet of over 120 pages entitled *Who Was the Art Architect of the Houses of Parliament: A Statement of Facts, Founded on the Letters of Sir Charles Barry and the Diaries of Augustus Welby Pugin* (see TEXT I of this volume), in which he explained that "my desire is that my father should receive his fair share of that fame which is now wholly accorded to *one*, who has hitherto been regarded as

the sole designer of that which my father mainly originated."* Rev. Alfred Barry (1826-1910), son of Charles Barry and an Anglican clergyman who later became the Bishop of Sydney, published his riposte to Pugin's pamphlet the following year, entitled *The Architect of the New Palace at Westminster: A Reply to a Pamphlet by E. Pugin, Esq., Entitled "Who Was the Art-Architect of the Houses of Parliament?"* (see TEXT II of this volume). This was followed by another attack by Edward Pugin in a pamphlet published in the same year, *Notes on the Reply of the Rev. Alfred Barry, D.D. to the "Infatuated Statements" Made by E. W. Pugin, on the Houses of Parliament* (see TEXT III of this volume).

The controversy itself over who was the actual author of the new Houses of Parliament has never been satisfactorily settled; it probably never will be settled. What interests us here is the fact that the competition between the two families—the Pugins and the Barrys—for the full recognition of their deceased fathers as the *bona fide* architect of the new Parliament became a centre of public attention at the time.

This controversy occurred precisely because the architectural tastes of both Barry and Pugin are realised in the design of the buildings. A number of letters concerning this controversy were written by ordinary citizens to editors of newspapers and magazines; and many of these letters are nothing more or less than expressions of the writers' impressions of the executed designs of the buildings, which were essentially symmetrical, exposing a bold mixture of, or conflict between, Italianate ideas and the Gothic spirit. Barry was recognised as an essentially Classic or Palladian architect and admired as such. Pugin, on the other hand, was widely seen as a medievalist, deeply imbued with the spirit and feelings of the priest-builders of the Middle Ages. The crux of the controversy stems, therefore, from the attempt to make an appraisal of the significance of the existence of both Italianate and Gothic influences in the executed design of the Parliament. Closely following the intense dispute between the two bereaved families as covered in the press, Victorian Londoners weighed the impact of Barry's Italianate-Palladian traditionalism versus Pugin's medieval-Gothic Revival design of details. Looking at the buildings of the Houses of Parliament, people amused themselves in trying to determine the credibility of both families' claims and then coming to their own tentative conclusions about the controversy. In so doing, they discussed art and architecture in their own ways, which inevitably exacerbated the antagonism between the two celebrated families.

Although it is not the aim of this work to settle the controversy, the writings by Edward Pugin and Alfred Barry compiled here in a single volume will reveal to readers that the great Victorian controversy over the

authorship of the grandest monument of Victorian Britain, and the feverish reactions of nineteenth-century British society to the controversy, were the result, if not the embodiment, of the Victorian democratization of artistic appreciation, and the gradual weakening of élitism in British art and architecture.

Note

[*] E. Welby Pugin, *Who Was the Art Architect of the Houses of Parliament: A Statement of Facts, Founded on the Letters of Sir Charles Barry and the Diaries of Augustus Welby Pugin*, London, 1867, p. xvi. See p. 51 of this volume.

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Ariyuki Kondo
July 2019

PART I

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

A VICTORIAN ARCHITECTURAL CONTROVERSY: WHO WAS THE REAL ARCHITECT OF THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT?

ARIYUKI KONDO

"The Stimulus of Competition" in Victorian Britain

"THE CARNIVAL OF ARCHITECTURE"—this was how the state of British architecture in the mid-nineteenth century appeared to the eyes of Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-52), a giant of nineteenth-century English Gothic Revivalism and the author of eccentric but yet very passionate treatises on the Gothic Revival[1], who wrote in his famous apologia for the revival of Christian architecture in Gothic forms (Figure 1-1):

> Styles are now *adopted* instead of *generated*, and ornament and design *adapted* to, instead of *originated by*, the edifices themselves.
>
> This may, indeed, be appropriately termed the *carnival* of architecture: its professors appear tricked out in the guises of all centuries and all nations; the Turk and the Christian, the Egyptian and the Greek, the Swiss and the Hindoo, march side by side, and mingle together; and some of these gentlemen, not satisfied with perpetrating one character, appear in two or three costumes in the same evening.
>
> Amid this motley group (oh! Miserable degradation!) the venerable form and sacred detail of our national and Catholic architecture may be discerned; but how adopted? Not on consistent principle, not on authority, not as the expression of our faith, our government, or country, but as one of the disguises of the day, to be put on and off at pleasure, and used occasionally as circumstances or private caprice may suggest.[2]

Pugin's observation was based on his notion of the state of nineteenth-century British architecture as being a barren battlefield where architects were all fighting for attention and recognition from potential clients whose

primary interests and desires were merely manifestations of their wealth and social status.

It was in eighteenth-century Britain that artists and architects became confident enough to exhibit their works in comparison with those of others. In 1757, David Hume (1711-76) wrote an essay entitled "Of the Standard of Taste," which is today often referred to as the first modern aesthetic inquiry. In this essay, Hume asserts:

> It is impossible to continue in the practice of contemplating any order of beauty without being frequently obliged to form *comparisons* between the several species and degrees of excellence, and estimating their proportion to each other. A man who has had no opportunity of comparing the different kinds of beauty is indeed totally unqualified to pronounce an opinion with regard to any object presented to him. … One accustomed to see and examine and weigh the several performances admired in different ages and nations, can only rate the merits of a work exhibited to his view, and assign its proper rank among the productions of genius.[3]

Artists and architects, well accustomed 'to see and examine and weigh the several performances admired in different ages and nations' through their travelling experiences on the European continent, had naturally come to acquire confidence enough to claim superiority in artistic judgements and skills. Now their primary object was what ought to be done to notify society, in particular the wealthy ruling class, of their artistic talent and ability.

Take the case of Robert Adam (1728-92), one of the most talented and successful British architects of the second half of the eighteenth century. Then still in the very early stages of his architectural career, Adam gave serious consideration to the way in which one should 'receive prospective clients in dignified surroundings'. He realized that a good address and a fine house were needed in order to dazzle his clients, and even found it necessary to have 'one of the handsomest chariots and prettiest pair of horses London affords', as he imagined that 'there is no way to get the better of these city fellows but by throwing them into despair at first sight, and no way so good or proper to get a good price as to take all methods to show you despise a bad one'[4]. Today, these words may sound silly; yet Adam was very serious in seeking prosperous patronage and ultimately seizing opportunities to execute his designs. It was nothing but this very notion which led the germination of the sense of competition against one's contemporaries amongst architects, the notion which presaged the advent of a new age of competition in the following century.

On the continent, competitions for public buildings and arts had long traditions, most notably the competition for the war memorial on the Acropolis, held in 448BC, and a competition organized in the 1660s by Jean Baptiste Colbert (1619-83) for the completion of the Royal Palace of the Louvre in Paris. But in Britain, it was not until the nineteenth century that people started to concentrate intensely on evaluating the merits of exhibited objects of art through means of comparison. "The stimulus of competition" was indeed one of the major facets of Victorian Britain, the era which was, in Prince Albert's words, "a period of most wonderful transition." In 1850, Prince Albert, Albert Francis Charles Augustus Emmanuel of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (1819-61) gave a speech at the Lord Mayor's Banquet "to win the City over to the idea of the [Great] exhibition," making specific reference to the significant impact of "the stimulus of competition," which greatly relied on mass production, on the everyday life of his subjects:

> The products of all quarters of the globe are placed at our disposal, and we have only to choose which is the best and cheapest for our purposes, and the powers of production are intrusted to the stimulus of competition and capital.[5]

What an artist produced—whether it took the form of architecture or painting—was no exception. Similar to the products of mass production, works of art were now onstage, offering themselves up for public applause or ridicule and entrusted to "the stimulus of competition and capital." Thus the age of the *carnival of competition* began.[6] As for competition in large-scaled public architecture, "during the reign of Queen Victoria there were sometimes more than a hundred competitions a year, resulting in buildings like the town halls of Cardiff, Glasgow and Manchester, Liverpool Cathedral, and Victoria and Albert Museum."[7]

Winning a competition was one thing, while getting attention on the stage of competition and being marvelled at by the public was another; for works of art other than the winner's also had a great impact. Since the Renaissance, the desire of artists for secular advancement and luxury had steadily increased; by the nineteenth century, through the dominant impact of rationalism and Benthamism, artists of architecture and painting came to dream more than ever of individual fame and public attention for their works. Works of art, whether paintings or architectural monuments, were now produced with the aim of advancing the fame of the artists and architects through exhibiting their skills in depicting visual forms or in designing stimulating facades and interior spaces. Artists and architects vied to win public favour; while a sense of rejection and defeat might

crush one's artistic confidence, excelling in competition could also be a supreme source of satisfaction, accomplishment, excitement and pleasure. The Royal Academy summer show was a popular amusement among well-to-do Londoners. While visitors to the show enjoyed the cultural atmosphere, painters were carefully observing exactly where on the walls in the exhibition rooms their works were hung. When they found their pictures hung in the centre of the best room at the Academy exhibition, they exulted over their success; when they found their paintings hung high on the wall, almost invisible to visitors, they were disappointed. The annual exhibition of the Royal Academy, in fact, functioned as a stage for Victorian artists publicising themselves to society.

William Hesketh Lever, 1st Viscount Leverhulme (1851-1925), for instance, is known as one of the prominent clients: for, having made his fortune in the soap industry in the 1870s and '80s, he built an extensive collection, purchasing paintings mainly through the summer exhibitions of the Royal Academy in the late 1880s.

At exhibitions and art shows, many artists gloried in their ascendancy in having their works marvelled at by the public. Benjamin Haydon (1786-1846), a Plymouth-born painter dreaming of living a life like that of Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-92), the eighteenth-century giant of British art who also hailed from Plymouth, recorded in his diary on 1 March 1823 of his one-man show that "[t]he private day was to-day, & the success complete and glorious … The approbation was universal, and Lazarus [Haydon's *The Raising of Lazarus*, painted in 1821-23] affected every body, high, low, & learned."[8] The next day he wrote, of the same painting, "No picture [of mine] was ever so universally praised."[9] But many other painters waited and waited for opportunities to make their names. A great number of them came to despair of the future—including Benjamin Haydon himself, despite his above-mentioned triumph. Haydon was eager to compete and win state patronage, yet lost the race hugely. Even before the original Palace of Westminster was destroyed by fire in 1834, Haydon had been conducting a campaign to decorate the interior of the Houses of Parliament with works by British artists. When a rumour circulated that the commission would be given to Peter von Cornelius (1783-1867), a German Nazarene painter, Haydon insisted loudly that the commission should be entrusted to a British painter or painters, surely hoping he would get the opportunity. Therefore, when the government decided to hold a competition in 1847 for oil paintings for the Palace of Westminster, "[n]o one welcomed the news of the competition for the cartoons more enthusiastically than did Haydon."[10] Haydon immediately entered the competition, submitting two cartoons. While the competition itself

attracted the interest of many artists, very few established painters actually entered the competition. Haydon's entry was therefore "a notable exception," and he himself must have had absolute confidence that he would gain one of ten premiums. However, he failed to win even "one of the twenty-one prizes that were ultimately awarded."[11] His spirits plunged, yet he still managed to finish two paintings and exhibit them in a one-man show, publicising his ability and talent to society. His unflagging effort as an artist was driven by his insatiable desire for fame and success. Unfortunately, the show "attracted barely any visitors."[12] The period of the show was shortened and, nearly three years later, he ended his life alone, shooting "himself in the head, but not fatally, and then end[ing] his life by cutting his throat."[13]

Even artists of renown swung between pleasure and anxiety, optimism and despair. Edward Burne-Jones (1833-98) attained and enjoyed fame and was never really out of work for long, yet was obsessed by the challenge of exhibiting paintings which would be evaluated in comparison with the works of others. In 1864, he showed four of his works, including the famous *The Merciful Knight* in an exhibition of the Old Water-Colour Society. However, his work was received favourably by neither the members of the Society or the press: "[T]he *Spectator* critic damned him and the *Athenaeum* ridiculed him." In Burne-Jones, this experience "left an impression that didn't wear off, and was always being added to by a sense of continual opposition and even covert insult every now and again…"[14] One could only resign oneself to such a fate in the *carnival of competition*.

Nevertheless, though artists and architects spent sleepless nights in worrying about their future, by turns hopeful and despairing about the public reaction to and reception of their work, public interest in competitions, art shows and exhibitions grew steadily. For the first time, ordinary people were able to experience the pleasure of studying and comparing works of art from paintings to architectural designs.

An example of such an exhibition enjoyed by the public is that of the submitted works for one of four fine-art competitions held in the 1840s, the 1843 parliamentary competition for cartoon drawings for the fresco-decoration of the new Houses of Parliament. At the exhibition held in the summer of 1843 at Westminster Hall, all the entries, 140 in total, were displayed. Queen Victoria (1819-1901) inaugurated the opening and the exhibition "caused the wildest interests"[15] among Londoners. "In the first two weeks, at an admission price of one shilling a head, there was an average attendance of 1,800 a day: then the Exhibition was opened free and was crowded throughout," and "on the closing day, September 2nd, 4,000 visited it,"[16] though the pleasure of going to see such exhibition was

not always motivated by aesthetic enthusiasm, but also by sensational news and scandalous hearsay; e.g., some who went to the above-mentioned exhibition were interested in seeing a drawing "generally known to be by the eccentric but gifted artist, Richard Dadd, who in a fit of mental derangement … had on August 28th murdered his father."[17]

From Competition to Controversy

Who was the real architect of the Houses of Parliament?

The Victorian obsession with competitions sometimes took unusual turns, for the 1835-6 competition held to redesign and rebuild the Palace of Westminster, which was destroyed in a fire in 1834, led to an unprecedented controversy over who was the *bona fide* architect of the new Houses of Parliament.

When a competition was announced in June 1835, one of the resolutions was "that the style of the building be either Gothic or Elizabethan style."[18] This must have caused a huge perplexity amongst Neo-Classical architects who were not well-experienced in a medieval style, yet the opportunity to design a grand national monument naturally attracted the attentions of the leading architects of the day, and 97 proposals in total, including designs by such famous architects as William Wilkins (1778-1839), Sir Charles Robert Cockerell (1788-1863) and Lewis Nockalls Cottingham (1787-1847), were submitted to the competition.

The winner, announced on 31st of January, 1836, was Sir Charles Barry (1795-1860), an eminent master of the Victorian Renaissance Revivalism. Barry was a largely self-taught architect, yet the fourth son of a wealthy Westminster stationer was able to experience a long trip to continental Europe, including France, Italy and Greece, and even extend his journey as far as Egypt and Syria. Amongst his extensive first-hand experiences in various styles in different countries, Renaissance architecture which he had studied in person in Rome and Florence had a decisive impact on the establishment of his personal Neo-Renaissance style. Barry was surely also knowledgeable of Gothic style; however, such knowledge could not be compared with his masterly handling of Renaissance idioms. His success in the parliamentary competition in "either Gothic or Elizabethan style," thus, was often attributed to his decision to engage a young, relatively obscure, yet very passionate Gothic specialist, Augustus W. N. Pugin as an assistant. Yet it was this contractual relationship between a master of Neo-Renaissance style and a gifted rising star in

Gothic Revivalism which ultimately led to an unprecedented controversy over who was the *bona fide* architect of the new Houses of Parliament.

It was, in fact, after both men had died that the controversy of the authorship of the Houses of Parliament became a matter of public dispute between the two men's sons, Rev. Alfred Barry (1826-1910), later the Bishop of Sydney, and the architect Edward Welby Pugin (1834-75). This dispute arose primarily through the publication of claims of authorship by both men in consecutive pamphlets which appeared in the late 1860s.

In 1867 Edward Pugin published *Who Was the Art Architect of the Houses of Parliament: A Statement of Facts, Founded on the Letters of Sir Charles Barry and the Diaries of Augustus Welby Pugin* (see TEXT I of this volume), in which he explained that "my desire is that my father should receive his fair share of that fame which is now wholly accorded to *one*, who has hitherto been regarded as the sole designer of that which my father mainly originated." [19] Edward Pugin's claim was mainly characterised by his strong suspicion that Barry had ignored his father's contribution to the design and "seemed studiously desirous to sever … all connection" with the Pugin family. Edward Pugin was incensed that his father was not considered to be the joint architect of the Houses of Parliament.

Alfred Barry published his reply to Pugin's pamphlet in the following year under the title of *The Architect of the New Palace at Westminster: A Reply to a Pamphlet by E. Pugin, Esq., Entitled "Who Was the Art-Architect of the Houses of Parliament?"* (see TEXT II of this volume). This was followed by another attack by Edward Pugin in the same year in the publication of *Notes on the Reply of the Rev. Alfred Barry, D.D. to the "Infatuated Statements" Made by E. W. Pugin, on the Houses of Parliament* (see TEXT III of this volume).

Prior to the publication of his first pamphlet, Edward Pugin had written letters to many different newspapers in which he questioned the authorship or originality of the designs of the Parliament Building. For Alfred Barry, Edward Pugin's first pamphlet, which made public the dispute between them, was "only the conclusion" of these letters and "in fact, contains very little which has not been expressed in them."[20] Pugin had collected letters and testimonies in his pamphlet to support his claim; Barry questioned their reliability, as they had been "chosen with an idea of making quantity a substitute for quality." He disregarded them as "mere hearsay of what was 'generally believed'" or as "vague occasional sayings" of the late Augustus W. N. Pugin.[21]

Edward Pugin, on the other hand, felt that, "however imposing may be the array of counter-evidence contained in Dr. Barry's pamphlet," it had

"an effect exactly opposite" to what Barry intended.[22] Pugin said that "the very magnitude of the machinery brought to bear against me is in itself suspicious," and "like an overdose of poison carries with it its own antidote."[23] He found the statements of Barry's witnesses to be "so sweeping and complete" that they claimed "too much" for what Barry hoped to establish.[24] The smear campaign waged by the two men became a brawl.

While various points were contended in the course of the controversy, the present commentary will limit its focus to the following three questions: 1) At what stage did Augustus W. N. Pugin actually join the Parliament project: Did he help prepare Barry's competition drawings? 2) Concerning the nature of Augustus W. N. Pugin's share in the actual design of the Parliament Building: Was he a mere "assistant" or was he in fact a "joint-architect"? 3) What happened to evidence which might suggest that Augustus W. N. Pugin's contribution to the design of the Houses of Parliament was significant?

The stage at which Pugin joined the Parliamentary project

Alfred Barry maintained that, long before his father sought Augustus W. N. Pugin's assistance, "the entire design had been not only worked out in his [Charles Barry's] own mind, but committed to paper in a series of plans, elevations, and sections all drawn by his own hand, in his well-known and admired style of pencilling."[25] According to Alfred Barry, it was only when his father began to fear that time was running out that he "determined to seek the assistance of Pugin."[26] He stresses that "this was at so late a date that, had not the designs, in plan and elevation, been definitely settled, it would have been impossible, even with Pugin's assistance, to complete the competition drawings by the time fixed for their reception."[27] This assertion is supported by Charles Barry's diary, which contains no mention of Augustus W. N. Pugin's assistance before October 12th, 1835.

Augustus W. N. Pugin's diary, however, has a number of entries suggesting that Pugin had assisted in Barry's competition drawings well before that date. For instance, on August 6th, Augustus W. N. Pugin wrote "Saw Mr. Barry. *Working drawings*." This entry is then followed by mentions of Barry's name on August 10th and 11th. Pugin's diary also reveals that Barry visited him on September 24th and indicates that discussion of the design of the Parliament Building could have taken place during this visit.

Barry's diary entry for the same day (September 24th) confirms that this visit did in fact occur, but that the reason for it was not to discuss the plans for the design of the Houses of Parliament: "Arrived at Salisbury from Bowood at half-past four. Mr. Pugin at the White Hart to receive my directions as to designs for the furnishing of Dr. Jeune's House."[28] At that time, Charles Barry was engaged in rebuilding King Edward's Grammar School, Birmingham, of which the headmaster was Dr. Francis Jeune (1806-68), later the Master of Pembroke College, Oxford, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford, and Bishop of Peterborough. This entry of Charles Barry's diary aroused Edward Pugin's suspicion that Barry's diary entry had been intentionally altered, for he asks "why so unimportant an event as Dr. Jeune's furniture is noted in Sir Charles's diary, when he makes no allusion to the 'compositions,' or the numerous architectural drawings forwarded to him by my father, immediately before and after?"[29] Moreover, Augustus W. N. Pugin's diary shows that, from the 16th to the 18th of September, Augustus W. N. Pugin was working on "*composition* for Mr. Barry," and that, on the 19th sent off more than one drawing to Barry.[30] After the visit of Barry to Pugin on September 24th, there are further relevant entries: "Sent off five drawings to Mr. Barry" (September 25th); "Worked all night" (September 26th); "Parliament House" (September 27th); "Sent to Mr. Barry 14 drawings" (September 29th); "Central portion" (September 30th); and "Sent to Mr. Barry 12 drawings" (October 2nd).[31] The amount of work Pugin handled for Barry in two weeks surely exceeded what was normally required for the designing of furnishings for the residence of the headmaster of a grammar school.

An even more dramatic assertion was then made by Edward Pugin in attributing the entire authorship of the competition design solely to his own father. When the *Report* of the Select Committee issued on 3rd June 1835 revealed that, for the new design of the Parliament, medieval styles were preferred to those of Greece and Rome, no one doubted that Pugin would be at the head of the competitors' list and "furnish a design immeasurably superior to those of his professional brethren."[32] Therefore, Pugin's unexpected decision to provide his ideas and services to two well-known competitors, Gillespie Graham (1776-1855) and Charles Barry, rather than work alone in the competition, undoubtedly surprised those who knew him.

However, there are indications that Augustus W. N. Pugin might have already prepared, on his own, a set of designs for the competition. A craftsman named "Hogarth," who had mounted other designs produced by Augustus W. N. Pugin for Charles Barry some time before he, "Hogarth," began the ones for the Parliament Building, testified that Augustus W. N.

Pugin himself had initially intended to be a competitor for the Parliament Houses.[33] According to Edward Pugin, his father's competition drawings were last seen on the day they were mounted, but there can be no doubt that a complete set of designs by Pugin was sold to Barry for 400 guineas, an amount "less than one-twentieth of what Barry received as the premium, without counting the subsequent professional fees,"[34] yet surely large enough for Pugin who is known to us for then being constantly anxious about his own financial situation. No record of this payment is to be found in Barry's diary, and Edward Pugin himself admitted that he was "unable to say with any exactness"[35] who actually paid the 400 guineas for the plans to his father. Yet he insisted that his father had told him that he [Augustus W. N. Pugin] had received 400 guineas from Barry and that his mother had reproached his father for "selling his brains."[36]

It has been also suggested that Augustus W. N. Pugin was unwilling to enter into the competition because he was a Catholic. Denis R. Gwynn (1893-1973) points out that Pugin was convinced that, as a Catholic, his "chance for the Houses vanished,"[37] so that he was forced to make "the best of the situation"[38] by helping other competitors. Pugin felt this because there was general prejudice against Catholics in Britain at that time. Although the Emancipation Act had already been passed in 1829, anti-Catholic feeling still lingered on in mid-1830s England. Thomas Talbot Bury (1809-77), an acquaintance of Augustus W. N. Pugin, however, categorically denied that Pugin declined to enter the competition for this reason, and instead attributed Augustus W. N. Pugin's decision to sell the plans for the Houses of Parliament to a pressing need for money;[39] yet it seems not entirely convincing to connect Augustus W. N. Pugin's decision to sell his plans for the Houses of Parliament solely to a need for money; for "Pugin would have gained one of the premiums (which were large) even if he failed to obtain the execution of the design."[40]

Pugin converted to the Catholic Church, more precisely to the *Old English* Catholic Church in June 1835. There was criticism concerning his conversion on the grounds that it was not a purely religious decision, but was, in fact, due to "his enthusiasm for medieval architecture and for the Catholic liturgy."[41] This sort of criticism even appeared in newspapers, and in answer to it, Pugin was compelled to express the hope that "in Christian charity my conversion will not any longer be attributed solely to my admiration of architectural excellence [in the age of the pre-Reformation]…"[42] Taking into consideration such circumstances, it is quite possible that Pugin himself accepted "an inferior position as a Catholic in regard to public works,"[43] especially when the public work in question was the Houses of Parliament of an Anglican nation.

Whatever the reason for Pugin's decision not to enter the competition, choosing instead to work as a "ghost designer" for Charles Barry, it leads us to consider a further question: Was he a mere "assistant" to Barry or was he in fact a "joint-architect" of the Parliamentary project?

The nature of Pugin's share in the actual design of the Parliamentary Building

Edward Pugin maintained that his father designed not only medieval details, but also exterior, interior and sectional elevations, as well as working drawings for every portion of the Parliamentary Building. He insisted that "the plan of the Parliament Houses was solely Sir Charles Barry's; the elevation and all details wholly my father's."[44] Edward Pugin never questioned that "the ground plan and general arrangements of the building" were Barry's, nor denied "the natural authority and advantages" of Barry's position as "the publicly appointed and recognised architect of the Houses."[45] However, he could not accept his father being treated as a mere assistant or a ghost designer, nor the knowledge that his father's share in the work was being hidden.

Charles Barry himself clarifies the actual extent of Pugin's contribution in one of his personal letters to Pugin. On 22nd October 1836, Barry wrote a letter acknowledging the receipt from Pugin of "the drawings of the Houses of Lords, the King's Stairs, &c." In this letter, after praising Pugin's drawings, as "they will in all respects answer the purpose most admirably," Barry requests further drawings from him, and continues,

> I send by this morning's mail a packet containing tracings of the Grand Public Entrance, and approach to the Houses and Committee Rooms. They are most wretchedly made by a youngster, who is as dull and destitute of feeling as the board upon which he draws: they will nevertheless, I doubt not, afford you all the data you require. The groining and interior generally of the King's or Record Tower entrance you may make of any design you think proper … I am much flattered by your hearty commendation of the plan, and shall know where to look for a champion if I should hereafter require one.[46]

It appears from the letters Charles Barry wrote to Augustus W. N. Pugin that Augustus W. N. Pugin was given some leeway in the designs. For Alfred Barry, however, Augustus W. N. Pugin's employment in the Parliamentary project was more a matter of assistance in the preparation of internal details and decorations of his father's design and superintendence of their practical execution. Charles Barry's decision to seek the assistance

of Augustus W. N. Pugin was, in Alfred Barry's view, perfectly justified, as "every architect, in conducting works on a great scale, must necessarily avail himself of assistance in detail."[47] To assert that an assistant's share in the work of a great monument such as the Parliament Building was in fact worthy of that of a joint-architect was not by any means a question affecting his father alone, but any architect who designed large-scale buildings.

One of the pieces of evidence on which Alfred Barry based his assertion that Augustus W. N. Pugin was an assistant rather than a joint-architect was a letter to the editor of *The Builder*, written by Pugin himself in 1845. In this letter, Pugin intended to put a stop to "certain rumours" which attributed to him more than "his proper share" in the actual work of the Parliament Building.

> To the Editor of *The Builder* (*Sept*. 6, 1845).
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> Sir,—As it appears by an article in the last number of the Builder, as well as in notices contained of late in other periodicals, that a misconception prevails as to the nature of my employment in the works of the new Palace of Westminster, I think it incumbent on me, in justice to Mr. Barry, to state that I am engaged by him, and by him alone, with the approval of the Government, to assist in preparing working drawings, and models from his designs of all the wood carvings and of the internal decorations, and to procure models and drawings of the best examples of ancient decorative art of the proper kind, wherever they are to be found, as specimens for the guidance of the workmen in respect of the taste and feeling to be imitated; to engage with artists and the most skilful workmen that can be procured in every branch of decorative art, and to superintend personally the practical execution of the works upon the most economical terms compatible with the nature of it, and its most perfect performance. In fulfilling the duties of my office, I do not do anything whatever on my own responsibility; all models and working drawings being prepared from Mr. Barry's designs, and submitted to him for his approval or alteration previous to being carried into effect; in fine, my occupation is simply to assist in carrying out practically Mr. Barry's own designs and views in all respects. Trusting to your fairness in giving insertion to this letter in your next number,
>
> I am Sir, &c.,
>
> London, Sept. 3, 1845. A. WELBY PUGIN.[48]

Before writing this letter, Augustus W. N. Pugin had repeatedly expressed his fidelity to Charles Barry in private letters to Barry. In a letter dated 16th June 1844, Pugin says "it is next to impossible for me to design any abstract portion of a great whole in the same spirit as you have conceived the rest, and I know it is only a waste of time in me to attempt it."[49]