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Burne-Jones's Roman Mosaics

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Burne-Jones's Roman Mosaics

IN June 1862, after seeing the mosaics of Venice and Torcello for the first time, Edward Burne-Jones (1833–98) wrote to his friend and patron John Ruskin (1819–1900). In his letter he discussed a plan, apparently conceived by the two men earlier that spring, for building a chapel and decorating it with mosaics:

'Ah! who went away and left me, when my heart was full of mosaics! . . . I want nothing but this chapel . . . and will give . . . one third of my years till the work is done . . . And I wanted to talk for three hours with you, as to whether a divine barn like the Arena Chapel would not be after all better than our many-domed vision – with a barrel roof that should hold our hierarchies and symbols and gods – and clear walls with windows only on one side – a clean space for our histories – and beasts and things below them – and a floor – O what a floor.'¹

Although this youthful vision did not materialize for Burne-Jones, neither did it fade. Nineteen years later, in 1881, he embarked, alone, on an undertaking that eventually grew into his largest decorative cycle: the mosaics in St Paul's Within-the-Walls, the American Church in Rome (Fig. 1). As a major project that intermittently occupied the last seventeen years of the artist's life, as a consummate expression in art of tendencies springing from the Oxford Movement, and even as the most extensive ecclesiastical decoration in late nineteenth-century Rome, these mosaics deserve careful study.

The material is not lacking. There are fifty-nine known sketches and studies for the cycle by Burne-Jones himself, and nearly twice as many by his studio assistant, T. M. Rooke (1844–1944) – most unpublished. In addition, part of Burne-Jones's correspondence concerning the mosaics, and all of Rooke's survives, and provides us with the most fundamental information of all – the dates when each stage of the task was begun and completed, the names of those responsible, and how English artists managed the execution and installation in Rome. This article reconstructs the chronology of the project, on the basis of these letters.

¹ Burne-Jones to Ruskin, undated [June 1862] (Collection, Kenneth A. Lohf, New York). Passages from Burne-Jones's other letters to Ruskin of June 1862 concerning the mosaics in Venice and Torcello are published in G[EOGIANA] B[URNE]-J[ONES]: *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, 2 Vols., London [1904], I, pp. 245–46. Henceforward: *Memorials*.

This article is based on the first chapter of my 1975 doctoral thesis for Columbia University, 'Burne-Jones and the Decoration of St Paul's American Church, Rome'. The complete correspondence concerning St Paul's, excerpts from which I quote here, is in the appendices of the thesis.

The cycle comprises three mosaics designed and installed by Burne-Jones between 1881 and his death in 1898, and a fourth executed from his designs by Rooke between 1906 and 1907. To take the mosaics in the order one sees them, but not in the order they were completed: Nearest the visitor who enters the church is the *Annunciation* on the first chancel arch (Fig. 17) – the subject unusual only in its desert setting. Continuing down the nave, on the second arch is the *Tree of Life* (Fig. 18) showing Christ symbolically crucified on a living tree that grows out of barren soil. On either side of the tree stand Adam and Eve with their attributes. In the semi-dome of the apse is the *Heavenly Jerusalem* (Fig. 19), an image of Christ enthroned before the walls of the celestial city surrounded by five of His archangels with their attributes, and an empty space for the absent Lucifer. Then, in the choir below the dome, is Rooke's translation into mosaic of Burne-Jones's drawings for the *Earthly Paradise* (Fig. 20). This represents the gathering of the saints and martyrs in heaven, but incongruously, the faces of the elect are portraits of nineteenth-century public figures, from Abraham Lincoln and Garibaldi to Burne-Jones himself. Verses from Luke and John are inscribed along the edges of the arches of the *Annunciation* and *Tree of Life* respectively.

In addition to the mosaics that were actually installed, Burne-Jones designed one for the interior entrance wall, the *Fall of the Rebel Angels*, showing Lucifer – absent from his niche in the apse mosaic – defeated by the archangel Michael and his hosts. The subject was only executed in a reduced version in oil, dated 1894 (Fig. 21). Between 1910 and 1913 this space was filled with two mosaics, the *Nativity* and the *Creation* by the American artist and director of the American Academy in Rome, George Breck (b. 1863); these, and a gold mosaic band with inscriptions in Hebrew and Greek placed in the apse to divide the dome from the choir, are unrelated to the Burne-Jones and Rooke projects.

The complicated history of the commission begins with the Republican liberation of Rome from Papal rule in September 1870. One of the reforms of the liberal government was a policy of religious tolerance, which, from the point of view of American expatriates there, meant the freedom to build the first Protestant church within the walls of the city. From June to December 1871, Dr Robert J. Nevin (1839–1906), rector of the American congregation, returned to the United States to raise money for the new church.

On this trip, and on one made between April and October 1872, he raised \$34,000 – enough to hire the architect of the English churches in Paris, Geneva and Constantinople, G. E. Street (1824–81).² Ironically, the English residents of Rome had just asked Street to design their church, All Souls, on the via del Babuino, as the architect explained to the art critic F. G. Stephens (1828–1907) in a letter written on 25th February 1872: ‘We are going to start for Rome tomorrow night . . . to look at sites for two Churches in Rome one for the English the other for the Yankee Episcopalians. By very odd coincidence the both came to me without knowing the other’s intention.’³

The Americans had chosen to build their church on the new via Nazionale, which ran through an undeveloped part of Rome from Piazza Venezia to the church of Santa Maria degli Angeli near the railway station. Street stayed in the city for only six days in March 1872, but approved the site, and even produced the first designs for the church. On 5th November 1872, eight months after the architect’s first visit to Rome, Nevin broke ground for the new building. The cornerstone was consecrated on 25th March 1876 (Fig.22).⁴

Street first publicly disclosed his plan to decorate the apse of his romanesque-style church with mosaics in the *Architect* for 20th November 1875.⁵ Two years later, in a history of St Paul’s, Nevin mentioned a larger project in which mosaics would eventually cover not only the rough brickwork in the semi-dome of the apse, but also the space above the exterior entrance door.⁶

But the mosaics could be executed only as patrons stepped forward to pay for them. In 1881 the banker, Junius S. Morgan (1813–90), donated money for the decoration of the semi-dome, and in July of that year Street wrote to Burne-Jones to formally offer him the commission.⁷ It is impossible to say how closely the two men then worked together in the few months before the architect’s death in December 1881, although we do know that Street’s plans for the decoration were modest compared to the large cycle of mosaics Burne-Jones eventually carried out.

A photograph of the interior of St Paul’s after the installation of the *Heavenly Jerusalem* in November 1885 shows approximately the effect Street had envisaged (Fig.23). In this early view, the single mosaic in the dome of the apse compliments, and is subordinate to, the spare interior space. In the nave, Street clearly had not planned mosaics for the

two chancel arches, which at this date are striped and not left bare, as the apse had been before being covered with mosaics. In the choir, Street’s original windows with stained glass by the firm of Clayton and Bell, visible in the photograph of 1885, are now blocked out by Burne-Jones’s *Earthly Paradise* (Fig.1). Today the mosaics, glistening in the darkness above the visitor’s head, dominate the interior of the building by erasing the lines of its architecture.

But in the winter of 1881–82, plans for the decoration of St Paul’s nearly expired with the architect of the building. After Street’s death Nevin apparently attempted to apply pressure on Burne-Jones to complete his designs for the apse. In February 1882, the artist wrote to George Howard, 9th Earl of Carlisle (1843–1911):

‘– the Roman Church I shall give up – Street is dead who could have stood between me + the cloth + could have helped me also with the workmen – but I cannot + will not be hurried about work – + I shall write this week + throw up the affair – having already wasted many a precious hour upon it – but I see it would be a life of torment + I am not fit for it –^{7A}

Whether or not Burne-Jones wrote to resign the commission, the rector was soon in London to discuss the matter with the artist. Nevin’s ambitions, naturally grander than Street’s, had soared after the architect’s death, and it is after his visit to London that we first hear from Burne-Jones of plans to cover the entire interior of the church with mosaics. In an undated letter, written in 1882, the artist told his friend Mary Gladstone Drew (1847–1927), daughter of the Prime Minister, ‘Dr Nevin has just gone and the Mosaic will be fun, won’t it, especially if it spreads over the Church.’⁸

Still Burne-Jones took things slowly. Between 1881 and 1885, before proceeding to designs for other spaces in the church, he worked exclusively on the *Heavenly Jerusalem*. He was still at work in November 1883 and only completed this first phase of the project in the autumn of 1884.⁹ From this period date six highly finished figure studies of Christ and the archangels. These were not preliminary sketches, but *ricordi* which he hung in the drawing room of his summer home, North End House, Rottingdean, Sussex.¹⁰ There also

^{7A} From the Castle Howard Archives.

⁸ LISLE MARCH-PHILLIPS and BERTRAM CHRISTIAN (eds.): *Some Hawarden Letters, 1878–1913, Written to Mrs Drew (Miss Mary Gladstone) Before and After Her Marriage*, London [1917], p.107.

⁹ ‘Book containing a chronological list of the works of Burne-Jones from 1856–1898, begun by the artist in 1872 and continued until his death.’ (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.) In Burne-Jones’s hand under the year 1883, fol.30: ‘Worked much on the mosaic for the church in Rome.’ Under 1884, fol.31: ‘Working on the mosaic very hard – which was finished toward the end of the year – and all the tesserae numbers saw the last cartoon sent to Venice.’ Henceforward: Burne-Jones Notebook 1856–1898, Fitzwilliam.

¹⁰ His granddaughter, Angela Thirkell (1890–1961) remembered seeing them there as a child. See ANGELA THIRKELL: *Three Houses*, London [1931], p.104. Two of these studies were by an assistant, probably Rooke. The six are: *Christ Enthroned*, by Edward Burne-Jones, c.1884. Gouache, 68.6 by 42.6 cm. (Piccadilly Gallery, London). *Uriel, Archangel of the Sun*, by Edward Burne-Jones. c.1884. Gouache, 68.6 by 42.6 cm. (Private Collection, Paris). *Gabriel, Angel of the Annunciation*, by Edward Burne-Jones. c.1884. Gouache, 50.8 by 25.5 cm. (Private Collection, Paris). *The Archangel Michael*, by Edward Burne-Jones. c.1884. Gouache, 50.8 by 25.5 cm. (Location unknown).

² St Paul’s American Protestant Episcopal Church Service Records of Rev R. J. Nevin, July 1867 to 5th March 1876 (St Paul’s Parish Archive). For Street see ARTHUR EDMUND STREET: *Memoir of George Edmund Street, R.A., 1824–1881*, London [1888].

³ The Bodleian Library. Ms. Don. e. 77, fols.60–61. The construction of All Souls was long delayed and was finished after Street’s death by his son A. E. Street. See CARROLL L. V. MEEKS: ‘Churches by Street on the via Nazionale and the via del Babuino’, *The Art Quarterly*, XVI, No.3 [1953], pp.215–28.

⁴ REV ROBERT J. NEVIN: *St Paul’s Within the Walls: An Account of the American Chapel at Rome, Italy*, New York [1877], p.81.

⁵ ‘American Church of St Paul, Rome’, *The Architect*, XIV [20th November 1875], p.228.

⁶ NEVIN, *op.cit.*, p.261.

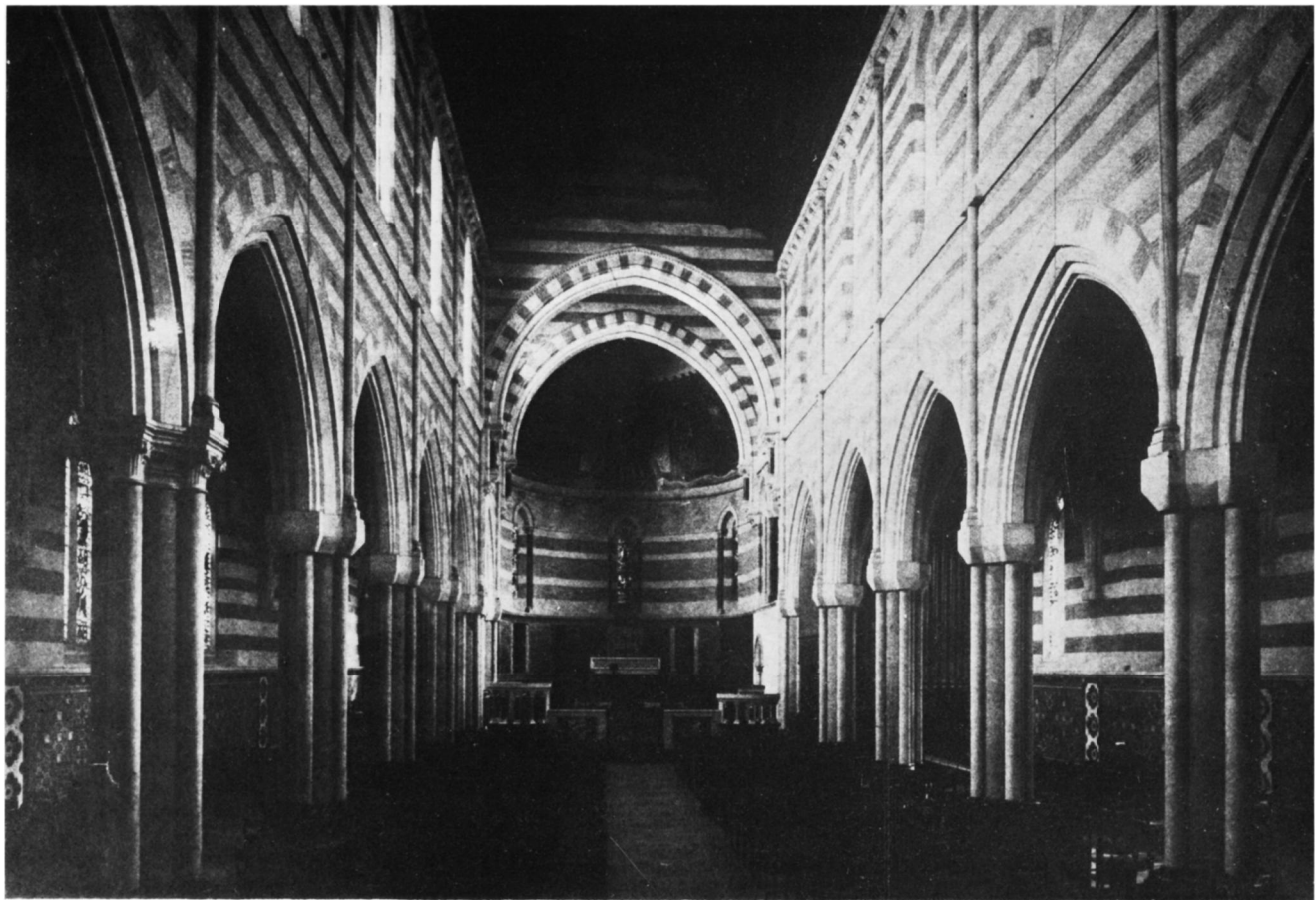
⁷ WALTER LOWRIE: *Fifty Years of St Paul’s American Church, Rome: Some Historical Descriptions by the Rector*, Rome [1926], p.37. Henceforward: LOWRIE. See also *Memorials*, I, p.114.



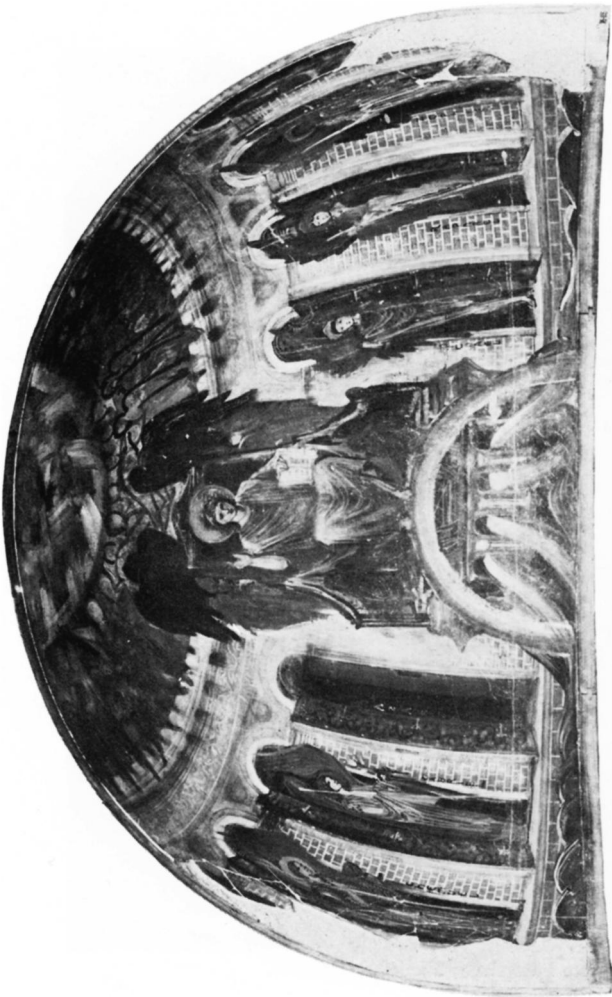
21. *The Fall of Lucifer*, by Edward Burne-Jones. 1886–94. Canvas, 248 by 118 cm. (Collection Mr and Mrs Robert Walker, Paris).



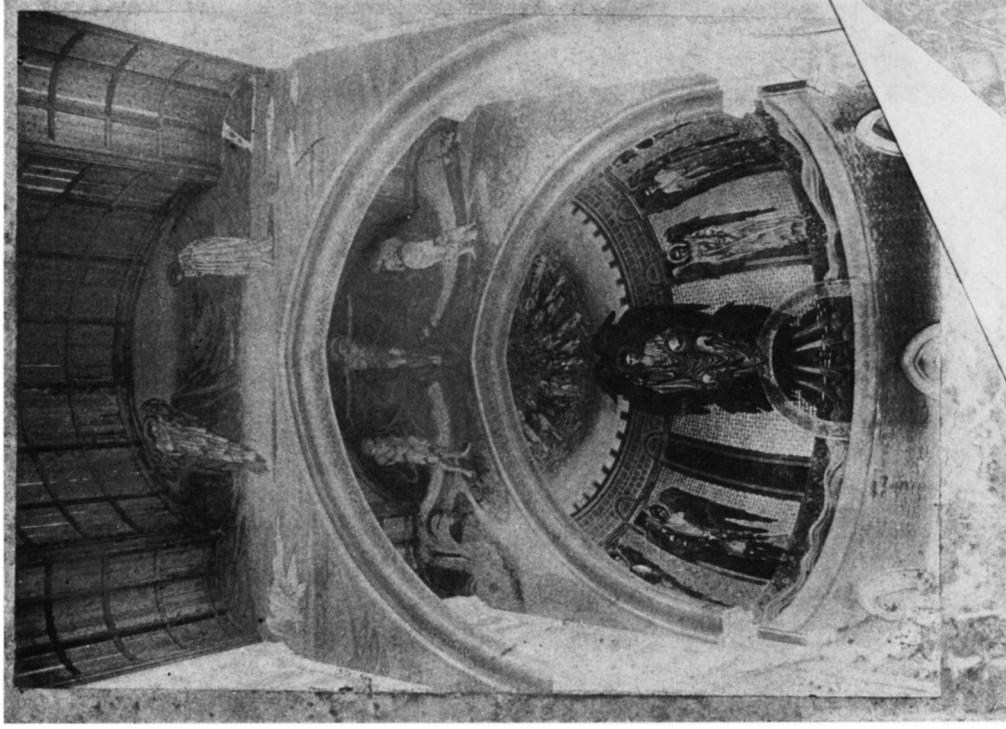
22. *St Paul's Within-the-Walls*, by G. E. Street. 1872–76. From a photograph taken c.1876. (Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale, Rome).



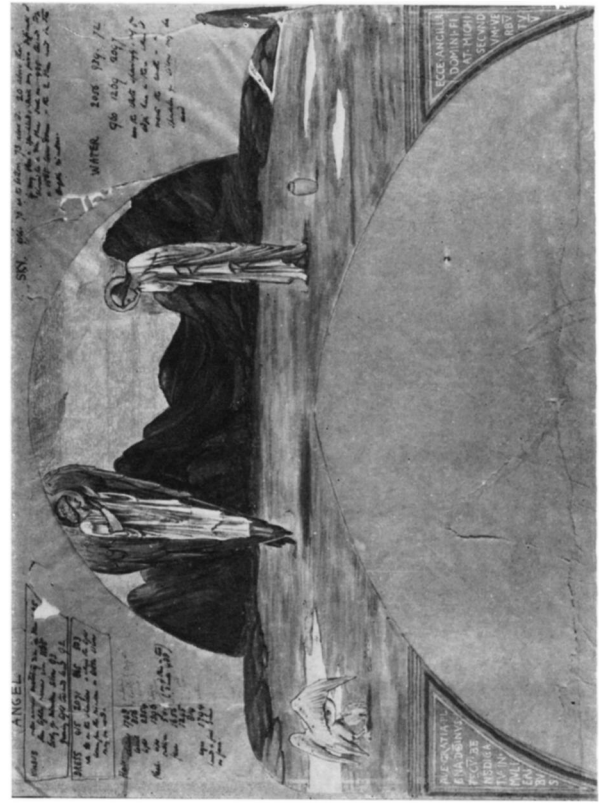
23. Interior of *St Paul's Within-the-Walls*. From a photograph taken c.1885. (Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale, Rome).



24. Model of the semi-dome of the apse of St Paul's Within-the-Walls, Rome: *The Heavenly Jerusalem*, by Edward Burne-Jones. c.1881–82. Plaster and wood painted in tempera, 61 by 100.4 cm. (Victoria and Albert Museum 365–1895).



25. The Mosaics in St Paul's before 1906. From a photograph taken c.1905. (Collection Thomas Hancock, London).



26. Compositional sketch for the *Annunciation* (with colour notations and instructions to mosaic workers), by Edward Burne-Jones. 1890. Gouache and water-colour on brown paper, 52.1 by 74.9 cm. (St Paul's Within-the-Walls, Rome).



27. Compositional Study for the *Heavenly Jerusalem*, by Edward Burne-Jones. c.1881–83. Gouache, water-colour on brown paper, 52 by 137.2 cm. (St Paul's Within-the-Walls, Rome).

survive two working compositional sketches for the dome (Figs.24 and 27), both executed before 1884. These reveal that the time-consuming aspect of the project was not the resolution of the composition or the iconography – for these remained constant from sketches to completed mosaic – but the problem of working with the unfamiliar medium of mosaic itself.

This Lady Burne-Jones confirmed in her biography of her husband:

‘. . . it would be impossible to describe the anxiety and labour connected with the mosaic. Edward and [William] Morris used to give part of their Sunday morning time to sorting out colours used by the Venezia-Murano Company [who carried out the project] from a cabinet of tesserae which had been brought to the garden studio, and they made duplicate lists of the numbers on the tesserae, which, when the work began to be executed, formed a means of communication with the workmen.’¹¹

One of these lists survives, in the form of a letter to the director of the Venezia-Murano Company, Signor Giovanni Castellani. It comprises long rows of numbers, incomprehensible to one who does not have the key to the numbering system, but trustworthy as a cipher between an English artist and Italian artisans. Burne-Jones simply isolated one part of the cartoon – the clouds, for example – then ‘painted’ it by citing numbers corresponding to the myriad coloured tessalations with which the workmen built up the mosaic. Thus, ‘Clouds – centre blue 551 – lighter tin 1675 pink 1785 – 1139 for outer rim – sky – 1686. 551. 1675. 1804 . . .’ and so on for dozens of pages almost unrelieved by written instructions.¹²

The procedure for transforming cartoons into mosaic was described by the founder of the Venezia-Murano Company, Sir Austen Henry Layard (1817–94), better known as the discoverer of Nineveh. In the Middle Ages, the artist was also the mosaicist; he executed every stage in the process, from erecting the scaffold in the building, to drawing the image and cementing the tesserae to the wall. But in the late nineteenth century, the artist only prepared the cartoons and listed where the tesserae were to be placed. Workmen employed by a mosaic company then translated the cartoons into mosaic, first separating the cartoons into sections and suspending these in front of them in the studio. Each workman selected tesserae from a tray at his side, then worked on a single area of the cartoon. Thus, they divided the work so that experienced men executed delicate areas, such as heads or figures, while beginners did backgrounds or drapery. When all the tesserae had been glued on, the completed mosaic was rejoined so that the whole effect

could be judged, and, if satisfactory, the sections were again divided and sent for installation. At the site, the sections were once again rejoined and cemented to the wall.¹³ As this process makes evident, Burne-Jones’s cartoons are now under the mosaics in the church; they were exactly the size of the final mosaic; and they were not reversed, as can be seen in a photograph taken around 1890 showing the *Annunciation* in the artist’s studio (Fig.28).¹⁴

Under this system, there was no need for Burne-Jones to go to Venice, where the mosaics were created, or to Rome, where they were installed. In July 1882 he wrote to Mary Gladstone Drew, ‘I . . . may possibly go to Rome – I don’t know yet – I hate travelling, especially alone – & feel it waste of time for me. & my true life is here in my studio’.¹⁵ In fact, after preparing the full-sized cartoons in London with the help of studio assistants, he never saw the mosaics in place except in photographs. Instead, he sent Nevin and Rooke to Venice to oversee their manufacture.

A barrage of letters written during the spring and summer of 1884 attests to the ferocity of his desire to keep the work up to his own exacting standards of craftsmanship. The first is to Castellani:

‘. . . my difficulties I think are chiefly over by now – and yours begin. If it were possible for you to send over to me an example of about 2 feet square that I might judge of the execution and effect – it would be of great help to me since it is impossible for me to see the progress of the work at Venice – my engagements being many and important here. I send you also a list of the numbered tesserae – classified for the guidance of the workmen . . . The colours are few and simple. I send also a drawing of one of the heads and part of a nimbus and wing, with tesserae arranged in the way I feel the mosaic should be executed – if the workmen had this set up before them I believe it would help them – they would soon fall into the way of designing the flow of the lines, and although at first the work might go slowly, and prove even costly I believe you would not regret it.’¹⁶

Castellani agreed to this plan and at once converted into mosaic a cartoon showing one of the harp-playing angels above the throne of Christ in the *Heavenly Jerusalem* (Fig.19). The result was a failure. When the normally mild-tempered artist saw it, he wrote Rooke an urgent letter describing the effect he was after.

He began by complaining that the completed fragment looked nothing like his cartoon – either in outline or in colour – and that the workmen were ignoring his instructions. He asked Rooke to ‘scold them, pitch into them, bully them, curse and refrain not’ until a result was achieved where the tesserae were the same size all over and close together. He continued:

Chemuel, the Cup Bearer, attributed to T. M. Rooke. c.1884. Gouache, 50.8 by 25.5 cm. (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyons).

Zophiel, Archangel of the Moon, attributed to T. M. Rooke. c.1884. Gouache, 50.8 by 25.5 cm. (Private Collection, U.S.A.).

All the studies, except for *Christ Enthroned*, are reproduced in ‘Mosaics by Sir Edward Burne-Jones at Rome,’ *Magazine of Art*, XVIII [1895], pp.256–60.

¹¹ *Memorials*. II, pp.141–42.

¹² Burne-Jones to Castellani, undated [Spring 1884] (Fitzwilliam Museum, Loose Collection of Letters and Notes. 1085 [Collocation 13 ff.], f.5 *recto*).

¹³ SIR (AUSTEN) HENRY LAYARD, D.C.L.: ‘Mosaics; And How They Are Made’, *The Newbury House Magazine*, n.s., II, No.3 [March 1894], pp.192–201.

¹⁴ Only a fragment of the cartoon for *Heavenly Jerusalem*, showing the head of Christ, survives (1883–84. Water-colour on card mounted on linen, 68.9 by 55.3 cm. City of Manchester Art Gallery). It is uncertain whether this is a separate study for the head of Christ, or was detached from the full-sized cartoon, which was then repaired.

¹⁵ The Mary Gladstone Papers, XXVIII (BM ADD MSS 46246, fol.145).

¹⁶ Burne-Jones to Castellani. Undated [Spring 1884]. (Fitzwilliam Museum, Loose Collection of Letters and Notes. 1085a [Collocation 13 ff.], f.1 *recto*).

'Forget that it is I that am concerned – suppose it is an old cartoon found and that it is desirable to render it, translate it, make it effective – VISIBLE, INTELLIGIBLE at a distance, at a good height – that the wings shall be shaded gold colour and distinct from one another as in a cartoon—the hair dark, the faces sweetly pale – the eyebrows straight, the darkness under them steady and solemn, the gradation of colour delicate and soft. . . . It must be done or I will destroy my cartoons and hand back the money.'¹⁷

He then wrote to Castellani with his complaints. The director apologized, promised to try again, and explained that his workmen were unfamiliar with the new techniques of mosaic making and had been forced to rush through a job that should have taken more time.¹⁸ A new drawing was dispatched to Venice, as the old one was under the mosaic specimen. Castellani acknowledged its receipt:

'Your coloured angel was admired very much, and with the assistance of Dr Nevin we examined and studied carefully every part of it and endeavoured with your letter before us to make all points quite clear. In a fortnight we hope to complete its execution in mosaic.'¹⁹

The new sample proved satisfactory. On 1st September 1884, the artist wrote to Rooke, who was still in Venice, 'Mosaic has come – very careful as good as ever I hoped for'.²⁰ After approving this sample, he sent all the remaining cartoons to Venice by mid-November 1884. Exactly one year later Nevin wrote to announce that the apse mosaic was finished. He unveiled it on Christmas Day 1885.²¹ Burne-Jones was pleased with the result. Writing to Castellani six years later on 20th October 1890 about the execution of the *Annunciation* mosaic, he praised ' . . . your artists who so admirably translated my work before'.²²

Only in the last months of 1885, then, when photographs of the *Heavenly Jerusalem* were presumably sent to him, could the artist have been sure that the technical quality of the entire apse mosaic was up to his meticulous standards of execution. Then, certain that he could realize his vision of a church shimmering from floor to ceiling with mosaics, he proceeded with the rest of the decoration.

All but four of Burne-Jones's forty known preparatory sketches in pencil for the arches, choir, and entrance wall are in an album of drawings bequeathed by the artist to the British Museum.²³ The album, made up with paper of superb quality, is beautifully bound in leather, on which is embossed 'EBJ 1885'. This date presumably refers to the year in which he acquired the sketchbook and therefore the year of the first designs for the remaining mosaics in St Paul's. It would be convenient to be able to pinpoint the day or month in 1885 when the album came into his possession, but since we cannot, we must speculate. Neither a rich nor an

extravagant man, it is unlikely that Burne-Jones bought so luxurious an object for himself. Rather, the album has all the earmarks of a gift – possibly received from his daughter Margaret (1866–1953), whose portrait he drew on its first page. Assuming that the artist began the sketches for the church only when the apse mosaic was completed, or nearly completed, a likely date for the earliest sketches would therefore be the artist's birthday, 28th August, or, perhaps 25th December 1885.

In June 1886, roughly six months after receiving the sketchbook, he wrote to his young friend Francis Horner, 'I want to go on with the American Church at Rome and have designed some bonny things to do there . . .'²⁴ He then described the subject of the entrance wall, the *Fall of the Rebel Angels*. But the plural, 'things', allows us to assume that the artist had also worked on sketches for the arches and choir by this date. We do not know to what degree of finish he brought them, however, because, just then, he was interrupted by the news that there was no money to pay him or the mosaic company for further work. This Burne-Jones explained in another letter to Francis Horner written about five years later in 1891:

'I made plans to cover all the walls from roof to floor with mosaics – but the rich man who promised to give the necessary money for them died suddenly and his heirs seized all his money, so the whole arrangement fell through and nothing has been done for five or six years.'²⁵

He had to wait until the death of one of Nevin's parishioners on 18th April 1888 before continuing the project. At the time of his death, the parishioner, Hickson Field, had left the palazzo he was building in Rome unfinished, and Nevin agreed to help his widow complete it on the condition that she pay for one of the arch mosaics.²⁶ Two months later, in June 1888, the archives of St Paul's record payments for postage on the shipment of mosaic designs from London to Rome.²⁷ These suggest that Nevin quickly asked Burne-Jones to send sketches or photographs of sketches for Mrs Field's inspection. Probably the artist sent several designs to Rome from which his patroness could choose. Among these may have been sketches for the *Fall of the Rebel Angels*, a subject he had continued to work on through 1887 and 1888,²⁸ and an alternative design for one of the arches, never executed in mosaic, the *Nativity* (see Fig.29). If he sent the sketches themselves to Rome, and not photographs, these served a dual purpose both as presentation designs for the patron, and later as *ricordi* for the artist. Three of these souvenirs, the *Nativity*, the *Tree of Life* and the *Annunciation*, and a fourth showing the glory of angels above Christ's head in the dome of the apse, hung in the

¹⁷ *Memorials*, II, pp.142–44.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, II, p.143–44.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, II, p.144.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p.144.

²¹ *Memorials*, II, p.159 and LOWRIE, p.37.

²² Collection Robert Stahr Hosmon, Coral Gables, Florida. Henceforward: Hosmon MSS.

²³ Burne-Jones Sketchbook, 1885–1898 (BM 1899 – 7 – 13, 322–544). This album of drawings has sometimes been referred to as the 'Secret Book of Designs' and contains sketches for projects other than the American Church.

²⁴ Fitzwilliam Museum Library, Burne-Jones Papers (Horner Letters), fol.5.

²⁵ FRANCIS HORNER: *Time Remembered*, London [1933], pp.124–25.

²⁶ LOWRIE, p.37.

²⁷ Building Fund of St Paul's Church 12th March 1872–6th April 1906 (St Paul's Parish Archive): 22nd June 1888: 'payment for Freight on mosaic designs'. Their return to London is also recorded, on 31st December 1888: 'payment to freight mosaic designs to London'.

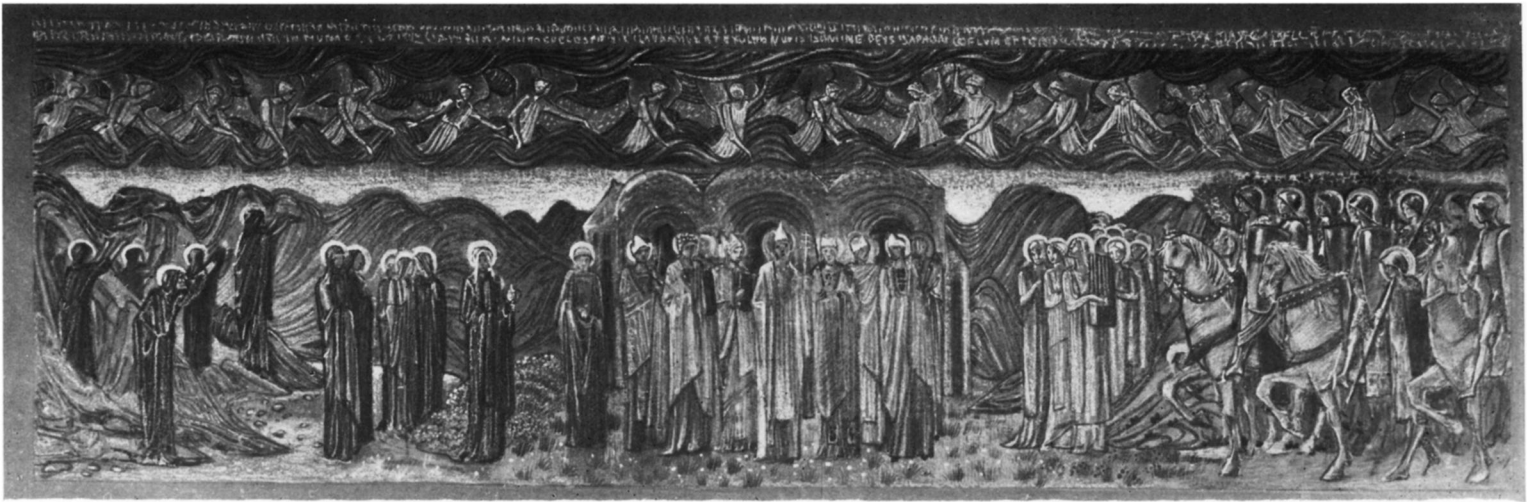
²⁸ Burne-Jones Notebook 1856–1898, Fitzwilliam. Under 1887, fol.35: 'began the design for the Fall of the Rebel Angels for Mosaic in Rome –'. Under 1888, fol.35: 'I worked on the Fall of Lucifer'.



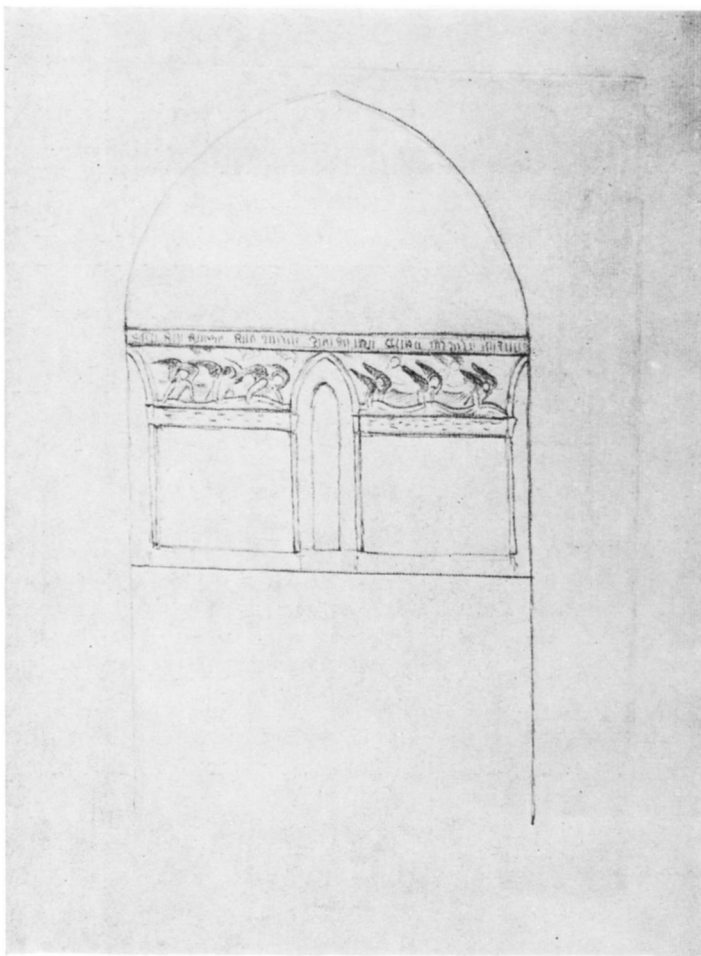
28. Interior of Burne-Jones's London Studio. From a photograph taken *c.*1890. (National Monuments Record, London).



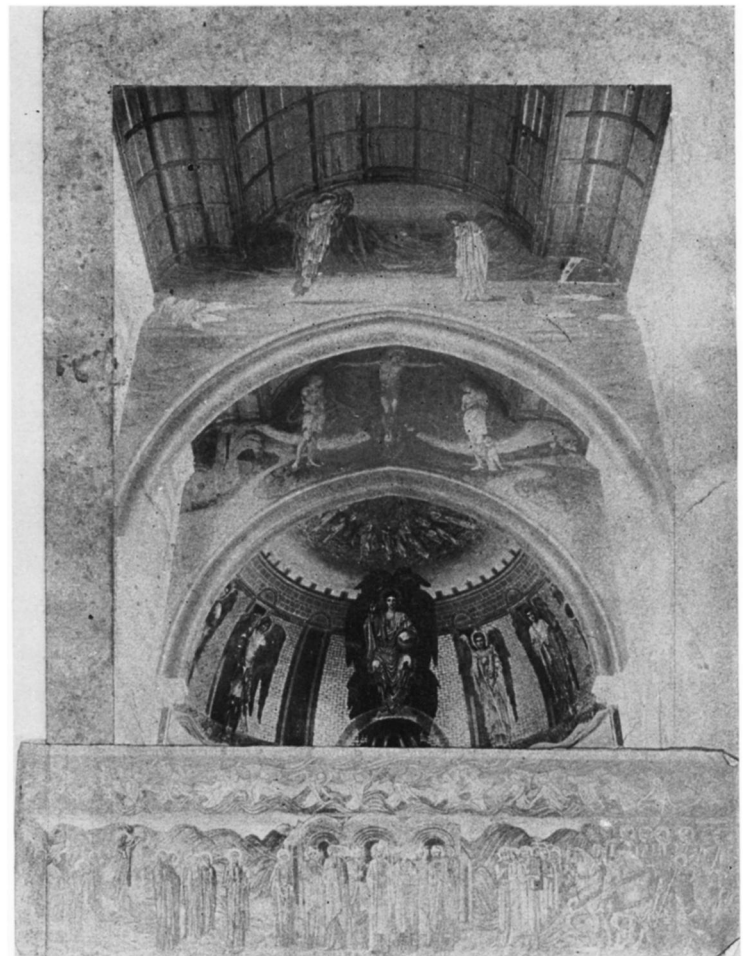
29. Interior of Burne-Jones's London House, the Grange. From a photograph taken *c.*1890. (National Monuments Record, London).



30. Study for the choir mosaic: *The Earthly Paradise*, by Edward Burne-Jones. c.1886–88. Gouache and chalk on brown paper, 54 by 139.8 cm. (St Paul's Within-the-Walls, Rome).



31. Study for the choir mosaic: *A Frieze of Angels*, by Edward Burne-Jones. c.1886. Pencil, 30.5 by 22.9 cm. (Burne-Jones Sketchbook, British Museum 1899-7-13-412).



32. The mosaics in St Paul's with a photographic reduction of Burne-Jones's design for the *Earthly Paradise* pasted over the choir area (Combine of Figs. 30 and 25). From a photograph taken before 1906. (Collection Thomas Hancock, London).

drawing room of Burne-Jones' house, the Grange, where they are visible in a photograph taken around 1890 (Fig.29).²⁹ When these designs were returned to London in December 1888, Mrs Field had selected the *Annunciation* for translation into mosaic.

Two years then passed before the cartoon for the *Annunciation* was ready to send to Venice. In this and the next mosaic, Burne-Jones partially abandoned the clumsy system of communicating with the workmen entirely by numbers, and worked directly with the tesserae himself. Thus, when the cartoons were sent to the Venezia-Murano Company, they were accompanied by packets of tesserae appropriately labelled with the part of the composition for which they were to be used. On the other hand, with the cartoons the artist sent a compositional study (Fig.26) marked with the old numbering system. This is all clear in a letter from Burne-Jones to Sig. Castellani written on 20th October 1890:

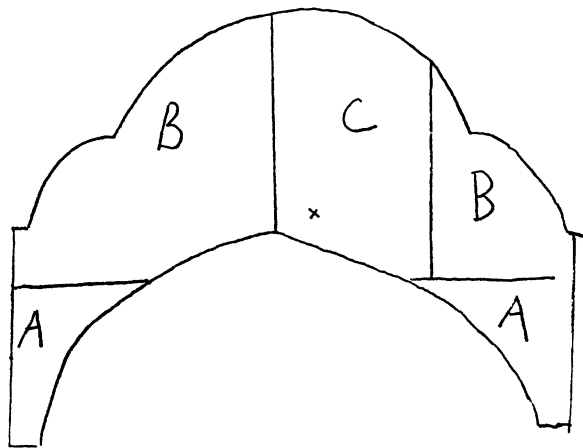
'I have today finished the cartoons for the new mosaic at St Paul's Rome . . . There will accompany the cartoons a small coloured drawing of the whole space, as a guide (Fig.26) – it is very roughly made but I hope will be sufficient for the purpose – the cartoons themselves of course give the drawing exactly – only the little sketch will be of help especially for the sky and general aspect of the whole picture . . .

I have packed all the tesserae, belonging to the different objects in the picture in separate parcels, labelled "mountains" "deserts" etc. which I hope will prove sufficient – if there should happen any difficulty you would perhaps confer with me about it . . . I know you will all do the best you can, + if we do another one, as I hope, by + by, the cartoons shall be more complete – the cartoons will reach you in bits – but with the accompanying coloured sketch you will have no difficulty in putting them together . . .'³⁰

Below, Burne-Jones drew a quick pen sketch showing how the cartoon was divided and therefore how it could be pieced together again (Fig.A). The photograph of Burne-Jones's studio taken around 1890 shows section B in the drawing, the angel of the *Annunciation* (Fig.28).

Although the cartoon was sent to Venice in the autumn of 1890, the mosaic was not made until the years 1892–93. By 21st November 1893, it was completed, and shipped from Venice to Rome.³¹ Scaffolds were set up by 4th December 1893 and remained up through the unveiling on 18th November 1894.³² The reason for the long period of installation was that a third mosaic, the *Tree of Life*, was put in place at the same time.

Although the first sketches for the *Tree of Life* in the British Museum sketchbook date from the last months of 1885 or the first half of 1886, the artist did not mention the subject in writing until the summer of 1891 when he wrote to Francis Horner, ' . . . last year [1890] I gave a big design to go over an arch – a huge thing – and now someone has offered to pay for another arch to be covered, and there I shall make the design I had set my heart on – of a great flowering tree . . .'³³ We do not know the name of the new patron. The full-sized cartoon was finished in London and shipped to Venice at the end of April 1893, again accompanied by a rough sketch in colour.³⁴ It was made into a mosaic in 1893, and with the *Annunciation* unveiled on 18th November 1894.³⁵



A. Tracing from a pen and ink sketch in a letter from Burne-Jones to Sig. Castellani, 20th October 1890, showing the lines along which the *Annunciation* cartoon was divided. (Collection Robert Stahr Hosmon, Coral Gables, Florida).

Burne-Jones died in June 1898. Not even this event deterred Nevin from his campaign to finish the mosaic cycle. On 14th December 1905 he invited Rooke to oversee the execution of Burne-Jones's designs for the choir mosaic, the *Earthly Paradise*. In his letter he explained that work on the decoration had stopped after the installation of the *Tree of Life* and *Annunciation* mosaics because of illness.³⁶ But he was anxious to resume:

'The first work I have in mind is to finish out the apse, by carrying down the mosaic + closing the three lancet windows. For this B.J. left a sketch with which you are doubtless familiar (I enclose a photo to refresh memory). I have a strong sense of justice to him that this should be done as closely as possible on his lines. In other work we can be more independent . . .'³⁷

²⁹ All the designs in the photograph are by Burne-Jones. They are, clockwise: *The Angels above the Throne of Christ*. c.1886–88. Gouache on brown paper. (Mrs Graham McInnes, London).

The Tree of Life. c.1886–88. Gouache on brown paper, 50 by 70 cm. (Piccadilly Gallery, London).

The Annunciation. c. 1886–88. Gouache on brown paper, 50 by 70 cm. (Location Unknown).

The Nativity. c.1886–88. Gouache on brown paper. 50 by 70 cm. (The Piccadilly Gallery, London).

³⁰ Hosman Mss.

³¹ Building Fund of St Paul's Church, 12th March 1872–6th April 1906. Record for 21st November 1893 (St Paul's Parish Archive).

³² *Ibid.*, Records for 4th December 1893 to 31st December 1894.

³³ HORNER, *op. cit.*, p.125.

³⁴ Burne-Jones to Castellani, 12th May 1893 (Hosmon MSS). The location of the sketch is not known.

³⁵ St Paul's Church Rome, Service Register 1st November 1884 to 30th October 1898 (St Paul's Parish Archive). Entry in Nevin's hand under 18th November 1894: 'Mosaics on two great arches in front of choir uncovered'.

³⁶ This letter, and the remainder of Rooke's surviving correspondence concerning St Paul's is in the possession of Thomas Hancock, Esq., London. The collection is not catalogued. Henceforward: HANCOCK MSS.

³⁷ The photo Nevin enclosed showed Fig.30.

Nevin's assistant and then successor, Walter Lowrie (1868–1959) wrote in his 1926 guide to St Paul's that '... we felt constrained to copy faithfully [Burne-Jones's] original design and did not venture to improve it even where the possibility of improvement was obvious'.³⁸

After some initial hesitation, Rooke accepted the commission. On 17th January 1906, Nevin wrote to him again:

'I have sent you a photo of the Apse, as it exists (Fig.25) . . . Burne-Jones's original sketch is here (Fig.30). It has been sent to me for study on the spot, with request for suggestions – I find I had made some pencilled notes on it. The frieze of Angels needs careful study . . . This was to separate the heavenly part from the Earthly Paradise below – It was stronger architecturally – I think this was in a little book of intimate sketches that has been given to the British Museum, where you can probably find it – a book with thoughts – He had in it a number of sketches intended to carry on the work in St Paul's.'³⁹

Rooke immediately went to see the sketchbook. In January 1906 he wrote to Nevin that the day spent

'... with the book of designs in the B[riti]sh Museum has been very fruitful. It seems to me that in most cases the first putting down of the motives is of the greatest value + cannot be too closely kept to. Enclosed are notes made from the two . . .'⁴⁰

Rooke sent tracings made from Burne-Jones's designs, including a detail study of the frieze of angels dividing the choir from the dome (Fig.31). Nevin wrote on 3rd February 1906 about these:

'You will notice that in the tracings you sent me the windows in the apse still appear – They made such difficulty in the composition, and I found the transmitted light of glass went so badly with the reflected light, that it was decided to close them up, to B.J.'s great content. Then he worked out the water colour and sent it to me for suggestions.'⁴¹

Nevin had sent Rooke a photograph of the apse showing Burne-Jones's mosaics and the choir as Street had originally designed it (Fig.25). Nevin or Rooke then pasted over this photograph a photographic reduction of Burne-Jones's water-colour design for the choir (Figs.30 and 32) to give them an idea of the effect Burne-Jones intended.

Rooke arrived in Rome on 24th March 1906, staying in the rectory of St Paul's as Nevin's guest. During his stay, he made preliminary cartoons for the choir mosaic, attaching them to the wall several times to test their effect.⁴² He also drew portraits of those American residents in Rome whose likenesses Nevin wished to include in the mosaics with various political, military, and social lights of the time as the saints in paradise. The one hundred and eleven portrait and compositional studies from this period still

exist, but constitute a separate topic in themselves.⁴³

In June, Rooke returned to London. Early in July, Nevin passed through the city on his way to Mexico where he planned to prospect for gold with which to decorate the ceiling of St Paul's – by now his obsession. In Mexico, he died. Although work on the mosaic was immediately halted, his heirs realized its importance to Nevin and on 22nd November 1906, his executor, John Nevin Sayre, a student at Princeton University, wrote to Rooke expressing his hope that the cycle would be finished.⁴⁴ Rooke replied at once that he was anxious to continue the work, and from this time forward his extensive correspondence about the mosaic is with Sayre.

Rooke worked on the designs during the winter of 1906–07. On 7th July 1907, he wrote to one of his patrons, Sydney Cockerell (1867–1962) from Venice that the cartoons were ready and that work on the mosaic would begin at once.⁴⁵ They were put in place between August and November 1907; the scaffolds were removed by November 1907; and the mosaic was unveiled on 1st December 1907.⁴⁶

⁴³ Rooke's studies are also in the possession of Thomas Hancock, London. They are catalogued in my dissertation (see above, footnote, 1).

⁴⁴ Hancock MSS.

⁴⁵ T. M. ROOKE: 'Extracts from T. M. Rooke's Letters to Sydney Cockerell,' *The Old Water-Colour Society's Club, Twenty-First Annual Volume* [1943], p.45.

⁴⁶ St Paul's Church Rome 1898–1927. Service Register 1st November 1898 to 31st October 1927. 1st December 1907: 'The mosaic of the perpendicular wall of the apse, just completed and visible to the congregation for the first time.'

Shorter Notices

Camillo Boccaccino: a Painting and a Drawing

BY MARIO DI GIAMPAOLO*

THE limited number of works and lack of interest on the part of criticism have not helped to contribute to a just estimate of Camillo Boccaccino, the founder of Cremonese Mannerism; only recently has Mina Gregori drawn the attention of students to the rôle he played in Italian Mannerist circles.¹ Even more recently an attempt has been made by a study of the drawings to examine in detail the genesis of Boccaccino's fundamentally Venetian formation.²

Already in the Cistello altar-piece of 1525, now in the National Gallery at Prague (Fig.33) the Cremonese master shows himself familiar with Titian's most recent paintings; there can be no question that the composition derives from the Pesaro altar-

* Dedicated to the memory of Francesco Arcangeli. In compiling this note, I would like to thank my friend Luciano Bellosi, Philip Pouncey, and W. R. Rearick who were kind enough to discuss with me the photographic material here illustrated. I must finally record my indebtedness to the Berenson Foundation for the loan of the photograph reproducing the Cistello altar-piece.

¹ M. GREGORI: 'Traccia per Camillo Boccaccino', *Paragone* 37 [1953], pp.3–18.

² See in particular G. BORA: *Disegni di manieristi Lombardi*, exhibition catalogue, Vicenza [1971]; *idem*: 'Note cremonesi-I: Camillo Boccaccino, le postoposte', *Paragone* 295 [1974], pp.40–70; M. L. FERRARI: *Il Tempio di S. Sigismondo a Cremona*, Milan [1974]; M. DI GIAMPAOLO: 'Aspetti della grafica cremonese per S. Sigismondo: da Camillo Boccaccino a Bernardino Campi', *Antichità Viva* XIII [1974], No.6, pp.19–31; G. BORA: 'Note cremonesi-II: l'eredità di Camillo e i Campi', *Paragone* 311 [1976], pp.49–74.

³⁸ LOWRIE, p.99.

³⁹ Hancock MSS.

⁴⁰ Hancock MSS.

⁴¹ Hancock MSS.

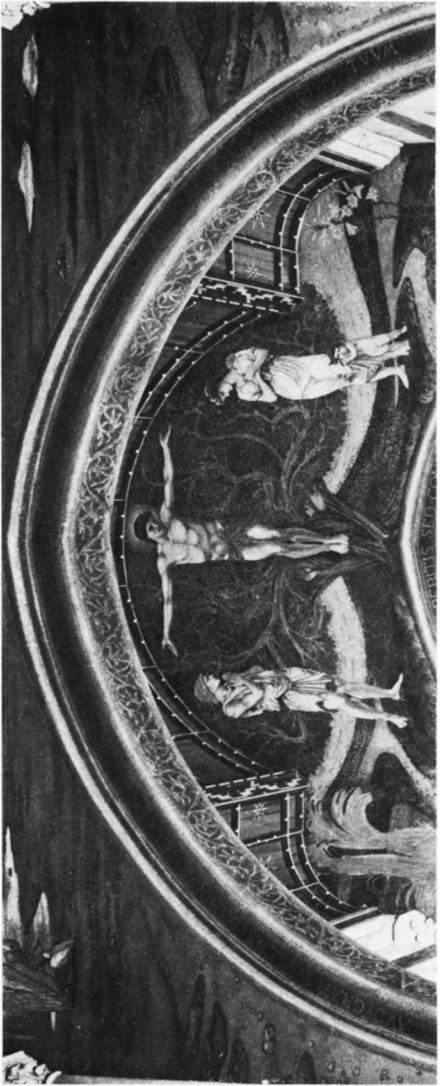
⁴² Rooke described this visit to Rome in a letter to John Nevin Sayre, undated, [autumn, 1906.] (Hancock MSS).



1. Nave and choir of St Paul's Within-the-Walls, architecture by G. E. Street; mosaics by Edward Burne-Jones and Thomas Rooke. 1872-1907. (Via Nazionale, Rome). See p.73.



17. *The Annunciation*, by Edward Burne-Jones. Designed 1886; cartoons executed 1888–90; installed 1894. Mosaic. (St Paul's Within-the-Walls, Rome).



18. *The Tree of Life*, by Edward Burne-Jones. Designed 1886; cartoons executed 1891–93; installed, 1894. Mosaic. (St Paul's Within-the-Walls, Rome).



19. *The Heavenly Jerusalem*, by Edward Burne-Jones. Designed c.1881–82; cartoons executed 1882–84; installed, 1885. Mosaic. (St Paul's Within-the-Walls, Rome).



20. *The Earthly Paradise*, by Edward Burne-Jones and Thomas Rooke. Designed 1886; cartoons executed 1906–07; installed 1907. Mosaic. (St Paul's Within-the-Walls, Rome).