



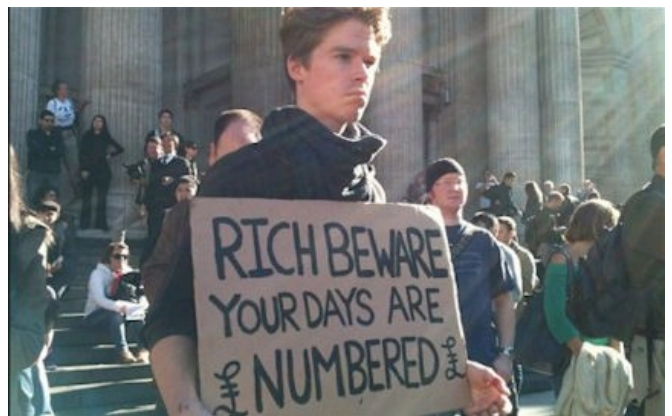
29th October 2011

## Makeovers, Sleepovers and Martyrs ~ Is St Paul's Cathedral fit for purpose?

In a bizarre and now fast-escalating sequence of events over the past two weeks, "Health and Safety" has shut the public out of St Paul's Cathedral for what is, contrary to press claims, the second, not the first time since the war. The first time was in connection with the exposure of staff members to injurious and sometimes illegal levels of sprayed-on stone cleaning chemicals during the recent restoration of the cathedral's interior. This time it has been a consequence of the cathedral's invitation to global anti-capitalist protesters to set up a camp of indefinite "occupation" when prevented from occupying the London Stock Exchange. As a result of that (apparently unilateral) initial decision by the Canon Chancellor, the Rev Dr Giles Fraser, the Cathedral closed its doors to the public on October 22nd because of (claimed) perceived risks to "life and limb" from the occupying protesters and their tent city. After losing admission charges (at £14.50 a head) that totalled £120,000 in six days, the cathedral's dean, the Rt Rev Graeme Knowles, invited the protesters to "leave the site peacefully", adding that while "we reiterate our basic belief in the right to protest", should the protesters not leave, "We have been and continue to take legal advice on a range of options including court action." On October 26th, the Guardian reported that the Bishop of London, the Rt Rev Richard Chartres, the third most senior cleric in the Church of England, said that it was now "time for them to leave" and that the camp's presence was threatening "to eclipse entirely the issues it was set up address". On October 27th the Canon Chancellor resigned (on Twitter) "because I believe the Chapter has set on a course of action that could mean that there will be violence in the name of the Church". A television news reporter said that this resignation would make it harder for the police to "use violence" against the demonstrators. That had hardly seemed a likely prospect, given that London's police officers could not stir themselves to deploy force even against teenage hoodlums who loot and burn down entire blocks of historic buildings, but the merest



Above, Fig. 1: Canon Giles Fraser, who has resigned from St Paul's Cathedral in protest at the decision to close the building. Shortly after his resignation the cathedral re-opened but Dr Fraser has acquired saint-like status in the eyes of the Occupy London Stock Exchange (OSLX) tent-dwelling protesters.



Above, Fig. 2: A member of the Occupy London Stock Exchange protests at the West Front of St Paul's Cathedral - but this is not exactly the storming of the Winter Palace, [one commentator](#) has remarked, adding that claims to be carrying out a "breach of the status quo" and launching a "seismic event" do not normally win the effusive backing of priests.

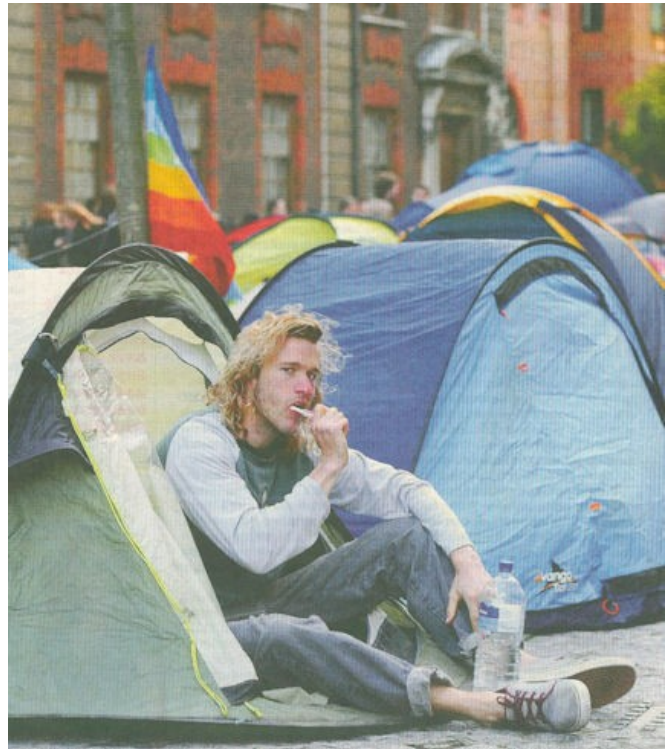


anticipations of “police brutality” can prove self-fulfilling high-octane energisers of protest and provocative confrontation. The Bishop of London offered to meet the protesters in a debate inside the cathedral if they first agreed to leave the camp. A less emollient Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, called for new laws to prevent tent cities erupting “like boils” and urged the protestors themselves “In the name of God and Mammon” to go. The prime minister, who may see the mayor as something of a political rival, echoed these sentiments in Australia, saying “Of course we need the right to protest but these tents – whether in Parliament Square or whether in St Paul’s – I don’t think is the right way forward, and I do think we need to look at this whole area and I’m very keen that we do.” In the occupied St Paul’s precinct it emerged that the encamped protest had something of a phantom quality; that most (i.e. a reported 90%) of the demonstrators were not sleeping overnight in their tents. A spokesperson for “Occupy the London Stock Exchange” insisted that thermal imaging was unreliable: “This is simply not the case. While it is quite possible that not every tent is occupied every night, we try to keep vacancy to a minimum and occupy a sign-in/sign-out system to help ensure this happens.” A letter writer in the Evening Standard testified to the gentility of the occupation forces: “Clearly there are lots of tents but the site is very well organized, calm, interesting and inspiring. The people I spoke to were welcoming and very well informed.” Patrick Kingsley in the Guardian spoke to one demonstrator, a besuited, tea cup holding 28-year-old who works in music PR and and who said: “I know it’s hard for people to get their heads around the fact that we’re in work but if there are tents here that aren’t always used, it means people are balancing other responsibilities, like child care, jobs or college. I do have to leave because I can’t always do my job through the internet.” Opinion polls conducted by the Guardian and the Telegraph showed that more than 80% of the public believe that the protesters (who claim to represent 99% of the population) should leave. The managers of nearby small businesses report 40-45% losses of trade – and the cathedral’s own **lucrative café-in-the-crypt** had lost 100% of its business. Adding to an already widespread general hilarity (there has been fun with “loose canons”, “canons to the left of them...” etc.) clerics and commentators couldn’t resist joining this very British ecclesiastical – in a very real sense – bun-fight.

Libby Purves in the Times nicely caught the public scepticism and impatience with the protesters: “it is, basically, a tented tantrum. A nylon-roofed, media-savvy, Twitterati, festival-inspired, Glasto-generation sulk.” The Guardian’s normally un-



Above, Fig. 3: Protesters, some with small children, taking part in the carnival-like jolly “Occupy Wall Street” that has triggered copycats in London and around the world. These protesters had given a lot of thought to clothes-for-the-day for themselves and their offspring – as the [New York Times](#) was quick to report (Photo: AFP).



Above, Fig 4: A protester at the St Paul’s camp photographed by Carl Court for a pro-demonstration article in the Guardian, (G2 October 26, “A full-time occupation?”).



Above, Fig. 5: The anti-capitalist demonstrators’ encampment at St Paul’s Cathedral (Photo: Reuters)



bellicose Simon Jenkins advised the protesters that successful uprisings must carry “the threat of violence”. An affronted reader/demonstrator wrote that this was no ordinary, common or garden occupation: “The people who have joined occupations are not just ‘squatters’ or ‘homeless looking for soup’. Indeed Occupy Wall Street’s working group on Alternative Banking includes bankers, a professor of financial law, the heads of various credit unions, and a quant trader.” At the Telegraph’s website, [Brendan O’Neill](#), the editor of [Spiked](#), noted a “warped class dynamic” in the camp, where “the majority of the occupiers are middle-class and well-spoken [with] lots of time on their hands”, while “many of the men and women in suits making their way to offices or trading floors in the City are working class”, and [Damian Thomson](#) saw that “Anglican Lefties have a new martyr in their midst – ex-Canon Giles Fraser...who has become a hero to the tent-dwellers of Occupy London Stock Exchange (OSLX), whose cause he supports. Indeed, a Facebook page celebrating his heroic witness has already been set up...Let his followers respect his wish for silence and restrict themselves to lighting a discreet candle on the steps of St Paul’s in commemoration of his noble sacrifice.” In a long-distance letter to the Guardian, the Rev Christopher Craig Brittain of Aberdeen thrilled “It is one of those rare occasions that leaders in the contemporary church long for: to be at the heart of the action. In a society with little interest in organized Christianity, suddenly St Paul’s cathedral finds itself at the epicenter of the Occupy London movement. Rather than serving as a museum to the past, it has become a site of public contestation.” In London, from the neighboring St Michael’s Cornhill, the perhaps better informed [Rev Peter Mullen](#) said the Dean and Chapter must be “ruing the day” they welcomed the activists: “It was a nice gesture but St Paul’s has to recognize that it lives in the capitalist world. In fact I would argue it is a bastion of capitalism. Why else does it charge £14.50 entry and take an immense amount of money from the City? It has just been given £40 million to renovate its stonework.” In the Telegraph, (October 28th) Damian Thompson, saw as one of the ironies in the St Paul’s saga, the fact that “Dr Fraser, who sided with the Occupy LSX campaigners against corporate greed, has employed his charm to encourage the City to support the restoration of St Paul’s.” As we have pointed out before, the entire £10.8 million cost of cleaning the cathedral’s interior was met not out of ticketed visitor income but by the generosity of the Scottish banker Robin Fleming and his immediate family. Damian Thomson’s quick attribution of martyrdom status to the welcoming canon has proved prescient: on the

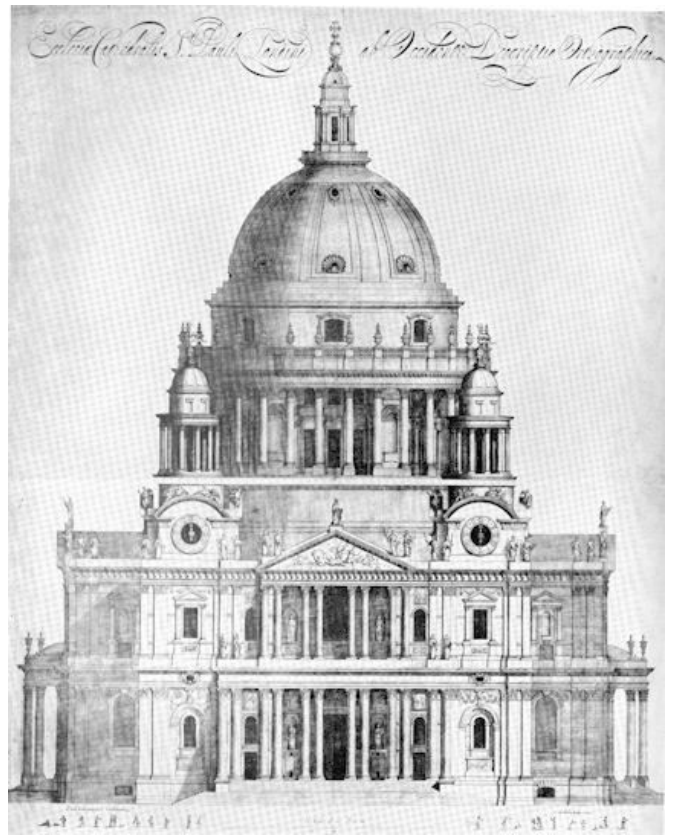


Above Fig. 6: Thermal imaging photographs that sparked a controversy. Taken by the Daily Telegraph, they were said to show that most tents were unoccupied after midnight (“Amid the ‘dark’ tents, protesters’ mood turns black”) October 26. In the Guardian (G2 October 26, “A full-time occupation?”) the same photographs were said “seemingly to show that many tents are empty.” The newspaper cited an unidentified “military scientist” who claimed that the camera “probably a hand-held FLIR thermal imager” would not detect bodies inside tents. When the Telegraph reporter attempted to check whether the seemingly unoccupied tents were occupied, he was ejected from the camp by three “grim-faced” men who demanded identification and claimed to be “from security.” Support for the Telegraph’s photographs came in the Times of October 29 in an article “Tent images did not lie” in defence of the newspaper’s own thermal photographs which had shown that the tents had a night-time rate of 90% un-occupancy: Richard Wallace, the head of Thermal Imaging said that the images (taken at ThermaCam P60 costing about £25,000) “reasonably suggested that most of these tents had no sources of heat inside them that would raise the external surface temperature.”

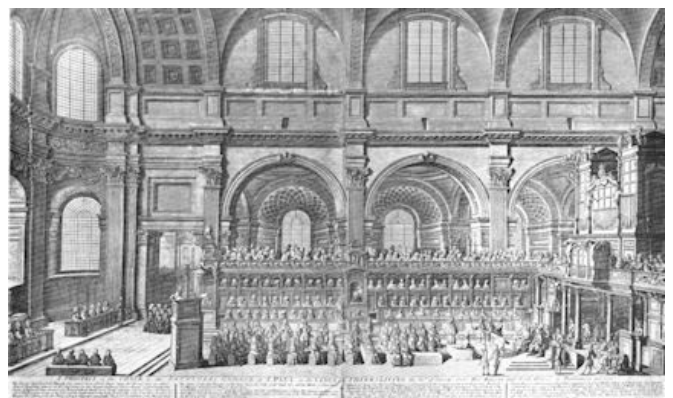


Above, Fig. 7: Sir Christopher Wren, architect of St Paul’s Cathedral. Bust by Edward Pearce, circa 1673.

29th of October the Daily Telegraph disclosed that another senior figure at St Paul's, Canon Mark Oakley, may also consider his position untenable. Having already voted against going to court to evict the demonstrators, Canon Oakley said "I couldn't vote for any course of action that might lead at some point to violent behaviour." Adding to St Paul's' management miseries, a second cleric, Rev Dyer, curate at St Peter De Beauvoir Town in east London, who worked part time at St Paul's, has already resigned online, saying: "I do not relish the prospect of having to defend the cathedral's position in the face of the inevitable questions that visitors to St Paul's will pose in the coming weeks and months, particularly if we are to see protesters forcibly removed by police at the Dean and Chapter's behest." This clearly media-savvy cleric added: "I am sorry that the story has become one about the Church and not about the City." Well - whose fault was that? Who invited whom? And how long now before demands to "Reinstate the St Paul's Three" inflame the protesters who have so swiftly forgotten the object of their own campaign? Arrests have already been made at St Paul's for public order offences, possession of drugs and a knife and an assault on a police officer. The management shortcomings at St Paul's are leaving the Church of England itself looking increasingly ragged as bishops go head-to-head on the conflict, while the Arch Bishop keeps his head under the duvet. In contradiction of the Bishop of London, the Bishop of Buckingham, Alan Wilson, has condemned the managers of St Paul's for their "hysterical overreaction" in shutting the cathedral, and urged them to join "the real world". The bishop, who would seem to be something of a class-warrior, explicitly questioned the cathedral's management judgements and capacities: "Do they have the stomach to engage in the real world at the crest of a tidal race between people, money and power, or are they just overgrown public schoolboys playing indoor games in their own self-important Tourist Disneyland?" That the Church is now so publicly groaning under the weight of its own politicised contradictions, could draw less genteel protestors into the fray at a time when capitalism's self-rewarding captains, ladling money over themselves in the midst of a profound and intense crisis, are presenting the plumpest target that has been seen for many years. That the retiring "Loose Canon" had been about to publish a report that is critical of bankers will further burnish his martyr's image. Eight Christian organisations have backed the occupying protesters who now plan a three months long siege, assisted by Bindmans whose lawyers have claimed that yesterday's reopening undermines the cathedral's claim that the protest camp obstructs worship.



Above, Fig. 8: The West Front of St Paul's Cathedral as engraved in 1702 by S. Gribelin.



Above, Fig. 9: The interior of the Choir at St Paul's Cathedral, as seen on December 31, 1706 and recorded in an engraving by R. Trevitt. The occasion was a Service of Thanksgiving attended by the Queen and both Houses of Parliament. This section had been fully decorated according to the wishes of Sir Christopher Wren.



Above, Fig. 10: The view from the west end of St Paul's Cathedral, looking north-east, as engraved by R. Trevitt and showing the the Morning Prayer Chapel on the left.

In the contemplative calm of the (excellent) Summer 2011 issue of [The British Art Journal](#), Florence Hallett discusses the confusions of past and recent restorations at St Paul's Cathedral ("Restoring St Paul's Cathedral"). Because of what the journal's editor, Robin Simon, sees as "the staggering fee now charged for entrance to St Paul's Cathedral", he had felt it appropriate to "place this account in the 'Exhibition Reviews'." We are very grateful to him for allowing us to add this study to our coverage of [June 1st](#) and [July 5th](#).

Florence Hallett writes:

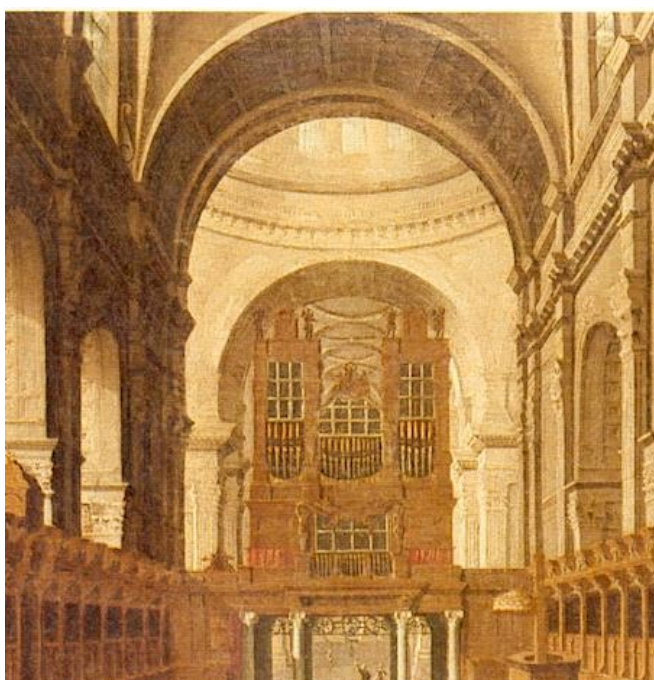
When *The Evening Standard* described the recently completed cleaning of St Paul's Cathedral as a "makeover", it highlighted something about the collective mindset of our age. Lauded as revealing, for the first time, "the interior as Wren intended it" [Endnote 1], this cleaning project is the latest attempt to resolve Wren's unfinished magnum opus, but could well tell us more about the aesthetic sensibilities of the early twenty-first century than it does about a so-called "authentic" Wren interior. The last time a similarly comprehensive programme of cleaning and decoration was undertaken, it was informed by a well-meant, but nevertheless contemporary interpretation of Wren's intentions for the building, resulting in the uncompromisingly Victorian mosaics extant in the choir.

From the moment St Paul's was pronounced complete in 1711, there was dissatisfaction with the interior, giving rise to any number of proposals to decorate it in a way Wren might have approved of. That the siren call of authenticity, long abandoned by most academic art historians, exerts such a seductive influence at St Paul's, must at least partially be due to its design and completion under a single architect. The myth of a clear authorial voice, frustrated by Wren's few and apparently contradictory instructions for the interior finish, combine with his famously troubled relationship with the church commissioners to suggest that Wren's vision for the building was thwarted in a way that can and ought to be put right.

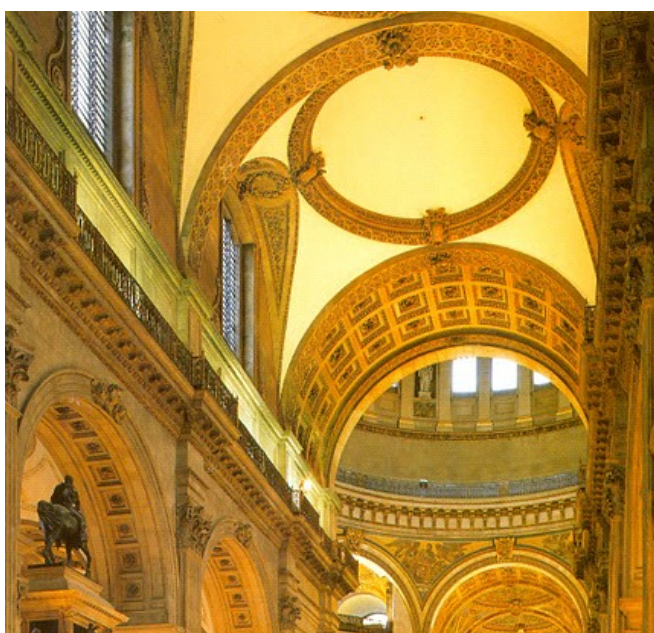
To further muddy the waters, the only part of St Paul's to be decorated before Wren fell out with the commissioners was the rather splendid choir, which together with the possibility that he may have favoured mosaic in the dome contrasts markedly with the restrained interiors associated with his city churches. Faced with such a range of possible treatments, it seems inevitable that, however genuine the desire for authenticity, ideas on how to finish the interior of St Paul's have been coloured by the prevailing aesthetic of the time. Thus, it comes as no surprise that in the



Above, Fig. 11: A view across the dome space at St Paul's Cathedral, looking north-west and as recorded in an aquatint by T. Malton. The nave is seen left centre and north transept on the right.



Above, Fig. 12: The original interior decoration of St Paul's Cathedral as recorded in an undated but apparently 18th century painting that is owned by The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths.



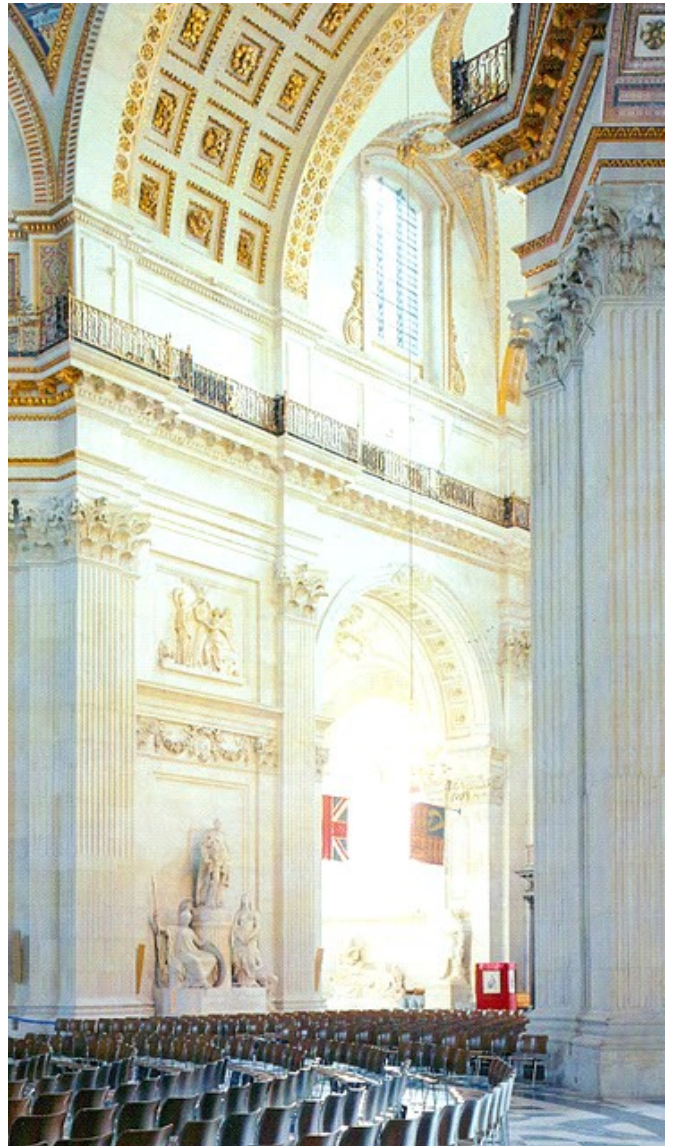
nineteenth century, when decoration was de rigueur, the strongest voices were in favour of painted and mosaic schemes. A pamphlet written in 1876, implored: "Do not leave the walls and flooring repulsively cold and unreal, like an ice surface." [2] Some thirty years later, the author of a cathedral guidebook asserted that Wren had been forced to leave the building in a: "naked, unornamented state" [3], adding: "that he intended mural decoration to be applied to the interior is an unquestionable fact", and of the domes: "his idea was to finish them with mosaic decorations." [4] Nevertheless, it was suggested at the time that personal taste, rather than scholarship drove the Victorian restoration. One critic mocked: "The Dean desires to add colour to the Church ... The Decorative Committee consists of several gentlemen of alleged refinement and reputed cultivation, of which the Dean is chairman." [5]

With over a century between that and the recent restoration, there are surprising similarities between the two projects, notably the claims made by both to be carrying out work that Wren would have approved of. In light of this, it is ironic that both restorations have seen fit to remove the stone-coloured oil paint Wren himself applied to the interior, with the added twist that today's restorers have given greater consideration to the botched nineteenth-century effort to remove the paint, than to Wren's reasons for applying it in the first place. Martin Stancliffe, current Surveyor to the Fabric, suggests the paint was either merely a preparatory layer for a decorative scheme, or an attempt to mask uneven-coloured or dirty stone, arguing against restoring Wren's paint on the grounds that, "it would result in a finish which, to modern eyes, would seem bland and perhaps inappropriate, and would undo the work so carefully and laboriously executed in the 1870s to strip Wren's paintwork." [6] The rather weak complaint that prior to being cleaned the interior was "shabby and dirty" [7], suggests that as in the nineteenth century, subjective taste has played a considerable part in today's restoration.

Just as the Victorians left their mark in the form of glittering mosaics, today's "makeover" culture has reaped its own results. Interviewed in *The Times* in 2004, Martin Stancliffe said: "when we started cleaning, the Dean and Chapter became gripped by the results, and said 'we must do this faster'." [8] A method of spraying on the cleaning product was developed to allow application over large areas of stonework, and the project, initially predicted to take twenty-five years, has been completed in fifteen. In an age that covets both the "wow factor" and value for money, the "miraculous transformation" [9] at St Paul's is, for now at least, enough to persuade visitors to pay the £14.50 entrance fee.



Above, Fig. 13: The Nave of St Paul's Cathedral, looking towards the Dome and the High Altar, as seen circa 1990.



Above, Fig. 14: A Martin Stancliffe chandelier in action, as seen from under the Dome of St Paul's Cathedral and as published in a programme for a Choral Evensong service on June 1 2005 in honour of the donors to the cathedral's 300th anniversary appeal.



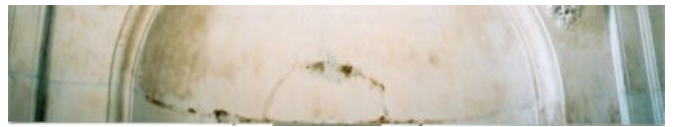
#### ENDNOTES:

- 1 Statement by Nina Anstee, director of the St Paul's Cathedral Foundation; Valentine Low, "£40m clean-up will show St Paul's as it has never been seen", *The Evening Standard*, 12 February 2002.
- 2 Anonymous, *St Pauls Cathedral: the impression and the remedy*, Reprint of pamphlet originally published London, Hardwicke & Bogue, 1876, p13.
- 3 George Clinch, *St Paul's Cathedral*, London, London, Methuen & Co., 1906, p160.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p160.
- 5 Samuel Howe, "The Spoiling of St Paul's", *Fortnightly Review*, 65 new series, April 1899, p635.
- 6 Martin Stancliffe, "The Cathedral Church of St Paul, London: proposals for cleaning the interior of the cathedral", unpublished document, September 1999, p14.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p3.

Florence Hallett

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Above, Fig. 15: A section of carving on the south transept of St Paul's Cathedral after being cleaned with the controversial Arte Mundit sprayed-latex solution method used to remove the last traces of Wren's original oil painted surfaces. David Odgers, the head of Nimbus Conservation, the firm that carried out the cleaning, admitted "Of course, cleaning stone reveals all the blemishes on the surface" and that this had meant "A great deal of time has been spent in trying to reduce the visual impact of imperfections, and this has involved pointing, stone repairs and removal of grout spills."

Click on the images above for larger versions. NOTE: zooming requires the [Adobe Flash Plug-in](#).