

379
N81
No. 7202

**BENJAMIN WEST'S *ST. PAUL SHAKING THE VIPER FROM HIS
HAND AFTER THE SHIPWRECK*: ALTARPIECE OF 1789 AND
DESIGNS FOR OTHER DECORATIVE WORKS IN THE
CHAPEL OF ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL, THE
ROYAL NAVAL COLLEGE, LONDON**

THESIS

**Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements**

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Margaret A. Hanna, B.S.

Denton, Texas

December, 1995

Hanna, Margaret A., Benjamin West's *St. Paul Shaking the Viper from His Hand after the Shipwreck*: Altarpiece of 1789 and Designs for Other Decorative Works in the Chapel of St. Peter and St. Paul, The Royal Naval College, London. Master of Arts (Art History), December, 1995, 173 pp., 60 illustrations, references, 86 titles.

This thesis analyzes Benjamin West's altarpiece *St. Paul Shaking the Viper from His Hand after the Shipwreck* and his designs for thirty-three related artworks in the Royal Naval College Chapel, Greenwich, England, as a synthesis of the major influences in his life and as an example of both traditional and innovative themes in his artistic style of the late eighteenth century. This study examines West's life, the Greenwich Chapel history, altarpiece and decorative scheme, and concludes that the designs are an example of West's stylistic flexibility and are related thematically to his Windsor Royal Chapel commission.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express by gratitude to the Greenwich Maritime Museum, Greenwich, England, for their permission to photograph their collection of drawings by Benjamin West, which he completed in preparation for the chapel altarpiece and other decorative designs within the chapel.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENT	iii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	vi
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	
Methodology	
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	8
III. BENJAMIN WEST'S LIFE AND STYLISTIC DEVELOPMENT	13
Early Life in America	
Study Tour of Italy	
Career in England	
Stylistic Development	
IV. THE ROYAL NAVAL COLLEGE CHAPEL	34
History of the Greenwich Chapel	
West's Chapel Commission	
V. THE ALTARPIECE	44
Subject of the Altarpiece	
Preparatory Drawings	
Description of the Painting	
Style and Sources	
VI. THE GRISAILLE PAINTINGS	65
The <i>Ascension</i>	

Chapter	Page
<p style="margin-left: 40px;">The Apostles and Evangelists Four Major Old Testament Figures West's Drawing Skills and Artistic Philosophy</p>	
VII. THE PULPIT AND READER'S DESK RELIEFS	80
<p style="margin-left: 40px;">The Pulpit Designs The Reader's Desk Designs</p>	
VIII. THE STATUES	96
IX. CONCLUSIONS	105
APPENDIX	122
<p style="margin-left: 40px;">1. CHRONOLOGY OF BENJAMIN WEST, 1738-1820.....</p>	123
<p style="margin-left: 40px;">2. CHRONOLOGY OF GREENWICH ROYAL NAVAL COLLEGE CHAPEL</p>	125
ILLUSTRATIONS	126
WORKS CONSULTED	168

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure	Page
1. Interior of the Royal Naval College Chapel, Greenwich, England	127
2. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. Paul Shaking the Viper from His Hand after the Shipwreck	128
3. Benjamin West, <i>St. Paul Shaking the Viper from His Hand after the Shipwreck</i> , 1789	129
4. Francesco Bartolozzi, <i>St. Paul Shaking the Viper from His Hand after the Shipwreck</i> , 1791	130
5. Biagio Rebecca, <i>Ascension</i>	131
6. Benjamin West, Drawing of God the Father	132
7. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. Matthias, 1788	133
8. Biagio Rebecca, <i>St. Matthias</i>	133
9. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. John, 1788	134
10. Biagio Rebecca, <i>St. John</i>	134
11. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. Thomas, 1788	135
12. Biagio Rebecca, <i>St. Thomas</i>	135
13. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. Jude, 1788	136
14. Biagio Rebecca, <i>St. Jude</i>	136
15. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. Simon, 1788	137
16. Biagio Rebecca, <i>St. Simon</i>	137

Figure	Page
17. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. James Major, 1788	138
18. Biagio Rebecca, <i>St. James Major</i>	138
19. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. Luke, 1788	139
20. Biagio Rebecca, <i>St. Luke</i>	139
21. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. Matthew, 1788	140
22. Biagio Rebecca, <i>St. Matthew</i>	140
23. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. Phillip, 1789	141
24. Biagio Rebecca, <i>St. Phillip</i>	141
25. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. Peter, 1788	142
26. Biagio Rebecca, <i>St. Peter</i>	142
27. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. Andrew, 1788	143
28. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. Bartholomew, 1788	144
29. Biagio Rebecca, <i>St. Bartholomew</i>	144
30. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. James Minor, 1788	145
31. Biagio Rebecca, <i>St. James Minor</i>	145
32. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. Mark, 1788	146
33. Biagio Rebecca, <i>St. Mark</i>	146
34. Biagio Rebecca, <i>Moses</i>	147
35. Biagio Rebecca, <i>Isaiah</i>	148
36. Biagio Rebecca, <i>David</i>	149

Figure	Page
37. Benjamin West, Drawing of Conversion of St. Paul, 1788	150
38. Richard Lawrence, <i>Conversion of St. Paul</i> , 1789	150
39. Richard Lawrence, <i>Vision of Cornelius</i> , 1789	151
40. Benjamin West, Drawing of Vision of Cornelius, 1788	151
41. Richard Lawrence, <i>St. Peter Released from Prison</i> , 1789	152
42. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. Peter Released from Prison, 1788	152
43. Richard Lawrence, <i>Elymas Struck Blind</i> , 1789	153
44. Benjamin West, Drawing of Elymas Struck Blind, 1788	153
45. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. Paul Preaching at Athens, 1788	154
46. Richard Lawrence, <i>St. Paul Preaching at Athens</i> , 1789	154
47. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. Paul Before Felix, 1788	155
48. Richard Lawrence, <i>St. Paul Before Felix</i> , 1789	155
49. Benjamin West, Drawing of Micah, 1788	156
50. Benjamin West, Drawing of Daniel, 1788	157
51. Benjamin West, Drawing of Zachariah, 1788	158
52. Benjamin West, Drawing of Malachi, 1788	159
53. Benjamin West, Drawing of Faith	160
54. Coade Factory, <i>Faith</i> , 1790	161
55. Benjamin West, Drawing of Hope	162
56. Coade Factory, <i>Hope</i> , 1790	163

Figure	Page
57. Benjamin West, Drawing of Charity, 1789	164
58. Coade Factory, <i>Charity</i> , 1790	165
59. Benjamin West, Drawing of Meekness, 1789	166
60. Coade Factory, <i>Meekness</i> , 1790	167

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Benjamin West, 1738-1820, Historical Painter to the King of England, George III, and president of the Royal Academy for twenty-seven years, developed into one of the most diversified and prolific artists in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Sometime in 1782 West obtained the commission for a fourteen by twenty-five foot altarpiece and designs for another thirty-three artworks to be installed in the rebuilt chapel of the Royal Naval Hospital, now Royal Naval College, in Greenwich, England.¹ The painting behind the altar was completed in the fall of 1789 and is the only major oil painting by West to remain *in situ*. It was also the largest work that West had completed in his career at that time and contains about fifty figures. Except for cartoons for a series of stained glass windows that were never completed or installed, it was also the largest work he painted prior to the last decade of his life. The biblical subject of the altarpiece is from the Acts of the Apostles 28:1-6 and depicts St. Paul on the island of Malta, after the wreck of the ship transporting him as a prisoner to Rome.²

¹Helmut von Erffa and Allen Staley, *The Paintings of Benjamin West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 384.

²*Ibid.*, 385.

The thirty-three works of art include fourteen grisaille paintings installed on the upper gallery walls depicting the twelve Biblical Apostles and two Evangelists, four major Old Testament figures and prophets painted in grisaille in the circles above the second floor gallery doors, and one grisaille over the altarpiece of Christ's *Ascension*, all completed by the Italian artist Biagio Rebecca. There are ten designs for low relief carved medallions placed on the pulpit and the reader's desk, six for the pulpit with subjects from the Book of Acts, and four for the reader's desk with subjects from the Old Testament. In the vestibule are four female allegorical statues in Coade stone representing Meekness plus the three theological virtues: Faith, Hope and Charity.³

West's total *oeuvre* of over seven hundred works encompasses many of the thematic and stylistic interests that were current during the Romantic Movement, c.1750-1850. Some of his subjects were traditional--stories from classical mythology and the Bible that had been depicted for centuries--but others were part of that Romantic quest for innovative content, narratives from the Bible and British authors that were not in the standard repertoire of painters. Influenced by his strong moral background and inspired by his three years in Italy, from 1760 to 1763, Benjamin West's early style and subjects were indebted to the passion for classical antiquity voiced by Johann Winckelmann in his art historical writings. Soon however, West was reviving elements of the Baroque style in order to invoke moods of awe, terror, and emotional extremes. Such moods were encouraged by the fashionable aesthetic theory of that day, the sublime, discussed by,

³Margaret Whinney, *Sculpture in Britain 1530-1830* (London: Penguin Books, 1964), 304.

among others, Edmund Burke in his *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*. The sublime emotions and the revived Baroque elements are central to what has long been called the Romantic style.

West was not just a participant but a pioneer in these trends of subject matter and style. In a 1938 exhibition catalogue, director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Fiske Kimball, wrote:

If the British school and West . . . were important in the formation of French classicism, we . . . find that he was equally in advance in the general development of Romanticism of figure painting.⁴

The ability of Benjamin West to absorb new ideas and utilize the variety of artistic styles of this period can be seen in his painting and designs for the Greenwich Chapel. A thorough study of the altar painting by West is important because of its size, location, unique subject matter, style, and the time period in his career in which it was completed.

West's final drawing for the altarpiece and another twenty-nine drawings for the remaining thirty-three decorative designs are extant but have never been published. Analysis of these drawings provides valuable insight into the Greenwich project. They are important also for their possible relationship to the largest commission given to West by King George III, the decoration of the Royal Chapel at Windsor Castle. He was working on this project when he commenced and finished the Greenwich Chapel.

⁴Fiske Kimball and Henri Marceau, *Benjamin West 1738-1802* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Museum of Art, 1938), quoted in Robert C. Alberts, *Benjamin West* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978), 223.

Not only are West's drawings and the altarpiece important because of their complexity of subject and style, but so is the chapel significant as part of a major British architectural and historical monument. It is part of the original group of buildings comprising the Royal Hospital for Seamen, the result of a proposal by Queen Mary in the 1690s. Before her death in 1694, King William and Queen Mary granted King Charles II's house at East Greenwich for the use of a hospital for the relief of Seamen, their wives and children.⁵

Sir Christopher Wren, the king's surveyor general, designed the hospital and chapel. After Wren's death, the project was completed in 1752 under the supervision of the Hospital surveyor Thomas Ripley. After a fire swept through the building in 1779, James 'Athenian' Stuart, who succeeded Ripley, and William Newton, his Clerk of Works, designed the present interior in the classical style. West finished the altarpiece and installed it just prior to the reopening of the chapel in September 1789.⁶

The naval pensioners and their staff used the chapel regularly until the hospital was closed in 1869. At this time the Admiralty Board created the Royal Naval College and from 1873 until the present time, officers and their families have used it for worship.

This paper contributes to the scholarship on Benjamin West by completing a comprehensive study of his entire decorative project in Greenwich as a major work of artistic and historical interest.

⁵John Cooke and John Maule, *An Historical Account of the Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich* (Greenwich, England: Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich, 1789), 42.

⁶Stuart Thompson, *The Chapel Royal Naval College, Greenwich* (Watford, Great Britain: Woodmansterne Publications Ltd., 1989), 4.

Statement of the Problem

This thesis analyzes the style, iconography and iconology of Benjamin West's altarpiece *St. Paul Shaking the Viper from His Hand after the Shipwreck*, and his designs for thirty-three other completed artworks in the Chapel of St. Peter and St. Paul, the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, England, as a synthesis of the major influences in his life and as an example of his use of both traditional and innovative themes in the artistic styles of the late eighteenth century that dominated his work.

Methodology

The primary data consist of the altarpiece and thirty-three other artworks in the Royal Naval College Chapel in Greenwich, England and were viewed on location. Also examined in the National Maritime Museum Library, Greenwich, were West's drawings for fifteen of the nineteen grisaille paintings, the ten pulpit reliefs, the four Coade stone sculptures, the altarpiece composition and the engraving by Francesco Bartolozzi of the finished painting. In their library also is a copy of the 1789 guidebook *An Historical Account of the Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich* by John Cooke and John Maule and the 1955 guidebook by Basil Watson, *A Short Guide to the Chapel of St. Peter and St. Paul*.

Also studied were other drawings related to the altarpiece or by West. They consist of one in the Chicago Art Institute; two in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts; a large collection in the Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania; another large collection in the Piermont Morgan Library, New York City;

and a smaller selection in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. These were viewed on location or through publications.

Additional primary data are letters, manuscripts, addresses, and memos written by West. The portion of this material that is in the United States is located in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the American Philosophical Society, the Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College, the New York Public Library, the New York Historical Society, and the Sterling Library of Yale University. The majority of these documents are on microfilm in the Archives of American Art, Washington D.C. and were researched there.

Available in the Victoria and Albert Museum are six volumes of indexed "Press Cuttings from English Newspapers on Matters of Artistic Interest 1685-1835." In the British Library and also in the Ft. Worth metroplex area libraries are copies of the smaller edited versions of *The Farington Diary*, published in 1928 and 1955. Joseph Farington was an artist, Royal Academy member and a contemporary of West who wrote a diary from 1793 until 1821 recording valuable information on the London art world. Other contemporary historians who wrote biographical material on West include John Galt, William Dunlap, Leigh Hunt, and Alan Cunningham.

Secondary data were obtained from books, periodicals, pamphlets and newspaper articles related to Benjamin West, the Greenwich Chapel, eighteenth-century English art and Anglican theology, and the court of King George III. Information obtained from these sources was used to determine the identity and background of the subjects in the

chapel, their relationship to the chapel and each other, and the way in which West envisioned each subject. In addition, this material was used to discover visual references West used by comparing his drawings to drawings from past or present artists, and to study the iconology--meanings of themes related to the history, architecture, religion and customs of the last half of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century--of all the art works.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A study of the literature on Benjamin West reveals that a substantial amount of material has been written in the last twenty years concerning his life and works. Also there were books published soon after his death that contain accounts about his life recorded by persons who were acquainted with him personally. These include a biography by John Galt, 1816-1820, who submitted most of his manuscript to West himself for approval; William Dunlap, dramatist, artist, biographer, and historian, who lived in West's home for a short time and recorded events from his life in *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Design in the United States*, 1834; Leigh Hunt, in his *Autobiography of Leigh Hunt*, revealed West's personality and tastes; and Allan Cunningham, who wrote a chapter on West in his *The Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters and Sculptors and Architects*, 1830-1839. The original twenty-five volume diary written by Joseph Farington covering the years 1747-1821, with emphasis on the Royal Academy members and activities, was republished in eight volumes in 1928 and sixteen volumes in 1978. During the time period between his death in 1820 or shortly afterward and the early 1970s, West was not considered worthy of publication as he had fallen out of favor soon after his death in 1820 and remained so for the next 150 years.

A complete catalogue of West's *oeuvre* was published in 1986 by Helmut von Erffa and Allen Staley and contains valuable documentary information and sources on the altarpiece. There are also several articles on West's life and work by von Erffa, a scholar who had studied West's life extensively. In 1973 Jerry Meyer, while studying at New York University, finished his dissertation on the religious paintings of West, followed in the next years by several articles on some of the individual English chapels for which West completed paintings, including the Windsor Royal Chapel. His publications are very informative, not only on the artistic work of West, but also concerning the importance and content of the theology of the Anglican Bishops who were so influential in artistic matters relating to the commissions of King George III and other ecclesiastical artistic projects. Other books or published material on West with valuable emphasis on his religious paintings include the publications by John Dillenberger and one by Nancy Pressley. Ann Abrams in her recent book *The Valiant Hero* concentrates on West's literary themes, but includes good eighteenth-century social and historical background. A thorough biography on West was written by Robert C. Alberts in 1978, an exhaustive source of material on the artist that contains most of any previously written biographies. Also available are further books and articles on West with emphasis on different aspects of his extensive career.

There are several collections of West's drawings available in this country which are invaluable. One is in the Friends Historical Library in Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania; another is in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, which

has also been partially published in an exhibition catalogue written by Ruth Kraemer in 1975. The Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Library has a small collection of drawings by West, and several of them relate to his chapel designs. Other articles have been written by Esther Sparks, Alfred Brooks, and Lindsay Stainton, which contain helpful reproductions of a few of West's drawings. These provide important resources for West's artistic background and thought processes.

Background history of Greenwich and the complex of buildings that developed into the Pensioner's Hospital and Chapel is recorded in two books available in the Greenwich Maritime Museum bookstore: *Royal Greenwich*, and *The Chapel, Royal Naval College, Greenwich*. Additional important historical material can be found in the article by Leslie Lewis on the architects of Greenwich, and in Edward Croft-Murray's *Decorative Painting in England 1537-1837*. In the Greenwich Maritime Museum Library are copies of the original guidebook, *An Historical Account of the Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich*, written in 1789 by John Cooke and John Maule. In addition they have a second guidebook written by Basil Watson after the chapel was restored in 1955. Both of these are invaluable for accurate detailed information on the original decorative scheme of the chapel.

Additional resources in London are the *Anderdon's Annotated Catalogue Scrapbook*, 1787, on the Royal Academy activities and exhibitions, and in the British Museum Print Room can be seen more drawings and engravings after West's paintings.

The British Library has a valuable rare book *Tour of a German Artist in England*, by M. Passavant, 1836, who includes a few comments on West's paintings.

Available on microfiche for information on historical precedents for the Greenwich drawings is the collection of artworks published by the Warburg Institute, located in the Kimbell Art Museum Library, Ft. Worth, Texas. Another important resource is the Princeton Index of Christian Art, a detailed subject index for Christian art completed in the Middle Ages, and can be researched in the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library, Washington, D.C. The information necessary for research concerning the past or present artistic sources that West used, the Roman army practices and clothing, and miscellaneous remaining historical events can be researched in published material appropriate to the need.

There has been no comprehensive material written specifically on the Greenwich altarpiece and the related decorative artworks designed by West for the Royal Naval Chapel. There are only brief references to the altarpiece in the literature on West. Therefore, although they have not been published, the most important resource for this project is the collection of drawings located in the Greenwich Maritime Museum, Greenwich, England. Included in the collection is a finished drawing for the altarpiece, *St. Paul Shaking the Viper from His Hand after the Shipwreck*, the engraving after the painting by Francesco Bartolozzi printed in 1791, and the twenty-eight drawings by West for most of the grisaille paintings, low-relief sculptures, and the four large Coade stone sculptures located in the chapel.

Altogether the literature and drawings available for this project constitute sufficient resources to support research into the total decoration of the Royal Naval College Chapel, Greenwich, England, completed by Benjamin West in 1789.

CHAPTER III

BENJAMIN WEST'S LIFE AND STYLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

The year was 1760 and the location Rome, Italy. Cardinal Alessandro Albani, a blind old man and nephew of Pope Clement XI, sat in the corner of the room. He was considered the foremost authority on art objects in this great city. A man was brought into the room and to the Cardinal's side. He was introduced as Benjamin West, a young American who had just arrived in Rome to study the great examples of art located there. The respected prince of the Church told the man to approach him. As his long fingers ran over the fine features he announced to his admirers gathered around him that this man had an admirable head, the head of an artist. With this accolade Benjamin West began his goal that he determined in his youth: to be a painter to kings and emperors¹. His rise to fame was phenomenal in England where he lived from 1763 until his death in 1820. West became King George III's favorite artist, a founder of the Royal Academy and its president for twenty-seven years, and he presided over a school that produced many of the famous American artists of the period.

Early Life in America

Benjamin West was born to John West and Sarah Pearson on 10 October 1738 near Springfield in Chester County, in the province of Pennsylvania. His grandparents were

¹Robert C. Alberts, *Benjamin West* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978), 14.

Thomas West, a cooper, and Rachael Gilpin, daughter of a Quaker minister. They came to America with William Penn in 1699 from Buckinghamshire, England. Their youngest son John stayed in England with relatives to complete his education in a Quaker school in Uxbridge. In 1714, after finishing school and working as a cooper, John joined his parents who were residing in Delaware County in the Quaker colony of Pennsylvania. John was born a Quaker, however, he was not in good standing when he came to America as he did not bring with him a certificate of transfer. Six years later John married Sarah Pearson, a Quaker at birth who had been 'disowned' from the local meeting for some action considered contrary to the Quaker beliefs. Their ten children--Benjamin West being the youngest--therefore were not officially Quakers, although they were raised in a strong Quaker environment.² West's Quaker heritage is emphasized because West called himself a Quaker and referred to his background often during his lifetime.

William Dunlap, an American biographer, actor, artist and younger contemporary of West, tells us that West's upbringing was very pleasant and normal, not soured by excesses of wealth or poverty. His father was an innkeeper who had rented a large house near Philadelphia to supply the needs of the many wagons of travelers leaving the Delaware River for the back country.³

His youth is chronicled with events that demonstrate his early fascination with drawing. At the age of eight, West was left to babysit with a niece. As she slept, he took paper and pen and drew her image. Mrs. West was surprised and pleased with the picture

²Ibid., 8.

³James Thomas Flexner, *America's Old Masters* (New York: The Viking Press, 1939), 22.

and cried "I declare he had made a likeness of Sally!" She kissed her son and West repeated later in life that "That kiss made me a painter."⁴ Encouraged often by his parents, West drew flowers, animals and birds with very simple materials. If his father had been a strict Quaker, he may have denounced these drawings because the Quaker faith frowned on all 'images' as idolatry and lust for the eyes.⁵ Because of the Quaker rationale concerning pictures, most people in the community were not familiar with paintings. Except for a few very strict friends, the majority thought what West could accomplish was miraculous, further encouraging him.

In 1785 when Dunlap was staying in West's home in London, West told him a story from his childhood. He vividly remembered the time when a Mr. Wayne from Springfield was interested in a group of his first drawings that consisted of six heads done in chalk on wood. Mr. Wayne paid West six dollars for them, an event that induced him to consider the profession of a painter.⁶

When West was nine years old, Mr. Pennington, a relative who was a young Quaker merchant from Philadelphia, gave West his first real paints and six engravings to copy. Pennington was so impressed with West's use of the materials that he took him to Philadelphia to show him around. There he met William Williams, who was an obscure and minor English portrait painter, but an artist who was to have a role in the

⁴Ibid., 26.

⁵Ibid., 26.

⁶William Dunlap, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Design in the United States*, edited by Rita Weiss (New York: George P. Scott, 1834; Facsimile Reprint, 3 vols. New York: Dover Publication, 1969), 1:36.

development of West's career. Upon learning that West's reading was confined to the Bible, he lent him books by Charles Alphonse du Fresnoy and Jonathon Richardson on the art and theory of painting. West indicated that his excitement was so great that he read them by day and slept on them by night. It is not known how much of these aesthetic theories he could have absorbed at his age, but he seems to have understood enough to begin the formation of his artistic philosophy. From Fresnoy he learned that he should study ancient Greece and raise nature to a higher ideal plane. Richardson expressed the view that to be an artist was to have great honor and dignity, a view that West believed in and promoted his entire life.⁷ Several years later Williams became West's first teacher. According to West, it was the books and prints to which Williams exposed him that taught him the progress of fine arts in the world.⁸

To judge from all indications, West's early education was very sparse. The artist's wife told Joseph Farington on 26 December 1804, that "He was so devoted to drawing while a child and a youth, that every other part of his education was neglected."⁹ Also during these young years West received instruction from a Mr. Hide, a German artist who was living at the home of a Mr. Flower who was a connoisseur of the arts. Flower had hired an English governess for his children who, in reading to them from the classics, also instructed West in Greek and Roman legends.¹⁰

⁷Alberts, 13.

⁸Ibid., 16.

⁹Joseph Farington, *The Farington Diary*, edited by James Greig, 8 vols. (London:Hutchinson, 1922-28), 6:2480.

¹⁰Alberts, 14.

In 1755 at the age of seventeen, West went to live in Lancaster, Pennsylvania in order to paint portraits of the Ross family. He also became acquainted with William Henry, a gunsmith who advised him that he should be painting morally uplifting historical subjects instead of portraits. Henry read to him the story of Socrates, showed him Gravelot's engraved frontispiece from the book and provided a man to pose for the half naked slave. West proceeded to paint *The Death of Socrates*. It was a crude and unsophisticated painting but a work whose composition was prophetic in that it developed what was later called a Neoclassical concept with the arches placed parallel to the picture plane and the figures in front of them like a bas-relief. West did not copy the Gravelot engraving, but changed a late Baroque asymmetrical vertical composition into a horizontal symmetrically balanced design.¹¹

In 1756, after he saw *The Death of Socrates*, the new and first provost of the College of Philadelphia, the Reverend William Smith, offered West free lessons in the classics for a year. Smith, a strong Anglican, taught West the basics of classical literature and the spirit of antiquity, background Smith felt was necessary for an artist.¹² The mood in Philadelphia at this time was one of religious tolerance. Although most of the inhabitants of the area were Quaker, some groups were more liberal than others. West attended the theater there even though plays were disapproved of by many strict Quakers.

¹¹Helmut von Erffa and Allen Staley, *The Paintings of Benjamin West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 11.

¹²Flexner, 34.

West was admired for his handsome appearance, athletic build, strong features and amiable personality as a young man and this perception continued throughout his life. His eyes sparkled with alertness but when he spoke it was with the sedateness and control of a Quaker preacher, displaying no strong emotions as he exhibited great control over his temper. His methodical and measured speech and his extremely moral actions combined to advance his career in this local community.¹³

Study Tour of Italy

West continued to paint portraits while in Philadelphia and his technical ability grew rapidly. His paintings began to look like those of John Wollaston, an English-born painter, the best portraitist in the colonies.¹⁴ West moved to New York in 1758 to paint portraits for a higher fee in order to save money for a trip to Italy. Provost Smith arranged for West to travel to Italy on a merchant ship owned by Mr. Allen and so he left on 12 April 1760, arrived in the Leghorn port on 16 June and was in Rome by 10 July.¹⁵

West, then twenty-one years of age, was accompanied by two youthful companions, young Mr. Allen and Colonel Joseph Shippen. Upon arriving in Leghorn, he was given letters of introduction by the Italian merchants Rutherford and Jackson to Cardinal Albani and other distinguished persons in Rome.¹⁶ West left Leghorn and traveled to Rome in the company of a French courier to begin a three-year journey that became a major influence in his career. This unsophisticated American from a conservative religious

¹³Ibid., 39.

¹⁴von Erffa and Staley, *The Paintings of West*, 4.

¹⁵Ibid., 13.

¹⁶Dunlap, 47.

neighborhood entered the Roman cultural society that was in a state of physical and moral ruin. He met famous artists and drew and copied to his best ability. Illness disabled him several times but he continued to study, paint, and assimilate the works of art he encountered. Because of who he was, an American traveling in Italy, he became the object of attention that caused excitement in every town through which he passed.

When West first arrived in Rome, he was taken to meet Cardinal Albani by a young Englishman who had heard that a young American Quaker was there in Rome to study the arts. West from this point on did not seem to deny this Quaker background, even though technically he was not a Quaker member. Most of the teachers and influences in West's life up to this time had been Quakers, except for Smith, who was an Anglican. West became an overnight sensation when he was introduced to the artistic community in Rome as a self-taught artist who had received his first colors from the Indians. The city of Rome was in a troubled state, as a result of war and foreign rule, however it was still considered the capital of the artistic world and recent excavations of Herculaneum and Pompeii added to the artistic display.¹⁷

In West's early reading in America he had learned that art at its best should exalt the mind and provide correct moral teachings to uplift the viewer. His artistic education in Italy continued in this vein. In Rome he was taught by Anton Raphael Mengs, the German artist who at the time was considered the greatest living painter. Mengs was inspired by Winckelmann, a German who was Cardinal Albani's librarian and whose

¹⁷Alberty, 35.

writings on art influenced Mengs and other artists profoundly. His theories on how human forms should appear--as parallel statues or figures in a frieze with no emotion or animation--and other classical references developed into the Neoclassical style of which Benjamin West became the leading figure in England in the 1760s.¹⁸

Mengs gave West some advice about his studies in Rome which West followed during the next two years. He traveled to Florence and Bologna in order to see the works of Guido Reni, Domenichino, Guercino, and the Carracci family. In Parma he examined Correggio's work and in Venice he studied the work of Tintoretto, Veronese and Titian. West then traveled back to Florence to finish copying Titian's *Venus of Urbino* and on to Rome to spend time absorbing Raphael's work.¹⁹

Mengs did not encourage West to spend much time on drawing, as he felt he was past that preliminary stage of artistic development. West's lack of drawing training did become evident in some of his work, but he covered up this deficiency by using the art historical knowledge gained from his Italian trip and his ability to quote sources from the past. While in Rome, West also visited and watched Pompeo Batoni, the well-known Italian painter. The styles of Mengs and Batoni were immediately evident in West's work completed in Italy. This ability to absorb and emulate ideas that he observed in other artists' paintings was a characteristic West exhibited his entire career. Other artists

¹⁸Flexner, 46.

¹⁹von Erffa and Staley, *The Paintings of West*, 14.

in Rome at this time who influenced him in this Neoclassical trend were the Englishmen Gavin Hamilton and Nathaniel Dance.²⁰

In September of 1763 West wrote to Colonel Shippen, who had accompanied him on his journey over from North America, to update him on his progress in copying pictures for his benefactors, Mr. Allen and Mr. Hamilton. West thanked him for his complimentary words that had encouraged his patrons to finance his trip, and mentioned also that he had painted one work for himself, *Cymon and Iphigenia*, 1763.²¹

Career in England

Upon arrival in London in August of 1763, West was pleased to learn that four of his American friends and patrons had preceded him. Included in this group was Dr. Smith, his Philadelphia teacher and friend, who introduced him to high ranking Anglican bishops who became his early patrons.²²

As West began to paint in London, he quickly began to imitate the style of the well-known portraitists in England, Gainsborough, Romney and Reynolds. His first full-length portrait was *General Robert Monckton*, c. 1764, a painting that is very similar to Reynolds in its strong brushwork and composition.²³ In 1764 at the exhibition of the Society of Artists, an organization formed in 1760 by a group of artists to sponsor annual local exhibitions, he showed this portrait and the two literary narratives from Italy,

²⁰Farington, 2:449.

²¹Thomas Balch, ed., *Letters and Papers Relatings Chiefly to the Provincial History of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Crissy & Markley, 1855), 70-71.

²²John Dillenberger, *Benjamin West* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1977), 3.

²³von Erffa and Staley, *The Paintings of West*, 31.

Cymon and Iphigenia and *Angelica and Medore* which were received with great approval and excitement by the public.²⁴ This event helped West decide to remain in London to work instead of returning to America.

Throughout his career in London, West welcomed, fed and housed and taught three generations of American students who came to his studio. He helped find commissions and work for them and most of all he encouraged them and helped to instill a great pride in their profession. His advice was to pursue their ideas and not to paint just like him. If their goal was to paint portraits, he advised them to look to Reynolds for inspiration.²⁵ William Dunlap, one of West's students, stated in his diary that West emphasized that they should observe from nature day and night and also copy from the antique.²⁶

West taught but also used his students to help with his work. He had no fortune to back up his work and had to support a house for his family and workshops for his large commissions from his salary. Gilbert Stuart, one of his most successful students, painted and modeled for him for five years. Other students of West who made valuable contributions to art were Charles Willson Peale, John Trumbull, and Joseph Wright.²⁷

Although West painted many portraits throughout the next twenty years, his goal was to be a history painter. Defined by the current artistic and intellectual establishment, it was the highest level of art requiring imagination, a correct choice of subject, a

²⁴William T. Whitley, *Artists and Their Friends in England* 2 vols. (London: Medici Society, 1928; Facsimile reprint, New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968), 1:195

²⁵ von Erffa and Staley, *The Paintings of West*, 31.

²⁶Dorinda Evans, *Benjamin West and His American Students* (Washington D.C.:National Portrait Gallery, 1980), 22.

²⁷Dunlap, 70.

knowledge of history as well as artistic precedents. These accomplishments would show the artist as one who was learned and whose goal was to uplift the viewer morally and spiritually.

During the years between 1766 and 1769, West accomplished his goal of becoming the most acclaimed history painter in England. Five of the many paintings that he completed during this time were in the new Neoclassical style and were mainly responsible for this achievement. One of these works, *Agrippina Landing at Brundisium with the Ashes of Germanicus*, 1768, had been commissioned by Archbishop Drummond, a sophisticated and influential man, who after becoming acquainted with West, often entertained him in his home. He was very interested in the arts and felt strongly that ancient virtues should be shown in art as examples for people to emulate. It was he who suggested to West that he attempt a work with the subject of Agrippina from the *Annals* of Tacitus, and even read the story to him. West was so entranced with the idea that he drew a sketch after arriving home and presented it to the Archbishop the next day. He completed the final painting and Drummond arranged for West to show it to King George III.²⁸ This event began a close personal and working relationship between West and the king that lasted for the next fifty years until both of their deaths in 1820.

The king was an intelligent man who wrote and spoke three languages, was widely read and had a library that would end up totaling 67,000 volumes. He enjoyed music, played several instruments, and wrote articles promoting scientific and agricultural

²⁸Alberts, 85.

advances. George III had been taught drawing, perspective, and architecture and became the first of the Georgian Kings to appreciate the fine arts and to use his office to promote artistic programs.²⁹ In 1768, the king sanctioned the formation of the Royal Academy of Art, after West and a small group of artists broke away from the Society of Artists due to harsh disagreements. The final Instrument of Foundation was presented to the king at St. James's Palace and bore the names of thirty-six Royal Academicians. Joshua Reynolds's name appeared first, Benjamin West second, and Thomas Gainsborough seventh. Ten were foreign born. Two women were listed; Angelica Kaufmann and Mary Moser, the only two women Academicians for the next 150 years. It was understood that they would not actually attend academy meetings but would send in their vote by mail or by proxy. The king approved and signed George R. at the bottom of the plan. Joshua Reynolds was persuaded to accept the presidency and West became one of the part-time staff professors.³⁰

The king seemed to take pleasure from developing a relationship with someone who was not in the government and with whom he could share his interest in the arts. He felt strongly that he should lead his country morally, consequently supporting an artist who had a strong religious background and who painted moral and immortal history pictures pleased him greatly.³¹ West completed over sixty pictures for King George III

²⁹Ibid., 86.

³⁰Alberts, 94.

³¹Flexner, 62.

between 1768 and 1801, and essentially monopolized all his commissions except for portraiture.

The artistic climate in England for history painting--religious, historical or mythological subjects--in the mid-eighteenth century was practically nonexistent. After the Reformation the Protestant churches had eliminated all "Popish idols," any art related to the Roman Catholic Church, which included sculptures and paintings of religious themes. Consequently the major demand for paintings during this time period in the Protestant countries was for portraiture, but West was more interested in pursuing the development of religious art. He received his first church commission in 1772 from a man with whom he had become acquainted in Rome for an altarpiece to be installed in the Rochester Cathedral. One year later in 1773, a group of artists from the Academy proposed a plan for the decoration of St. Paul's Cathedral. Each of the six artists--Sir Joshua Reynolds, James Barry, Giovanni Battista Cipriani, Nathaniel Dance, Angelica Kauffmann, and West--would donate a painting to decorate the church. Even though the Dean of the Cathedral was for the project, the Bishop of London canceled the plan on the grounds of popery.³²

In the Royal Academy show of 1774 West exhibited three religious works, all related to church commissions. These were followed by a large altarpiece for the chapel of Trinity College, Cambridge, 1777, and by another for Winchester Cathedral in 1780.³³

³²von Erffa and Staley, *The Paintings of West*, 87.

³³Jerry D. Meyer, "Benjamin West's Chapel of Revealed Religion: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Protestant Religious Art," *The Art Bulletin*, June 1975, 247.

In 1778, George III decided to refurbish Windsor Castle and West was commissioned to paint a series of biblical subject paintings for the Royal Chapel, a series of historical subjects for the Audience Chamber, an altarpiece and designs for stained glass windows for St. George's Chapel in the Lower Ward, and designs for a ceiling in the Queen's Lodge outside the castle walls. West began to receive from the king at this time an annual stipend of one thousand pounds.³⁴ To be closer to his work, West bought a house for his family in Windsor and he was given a room in the castle in which to work. While living there, he and his family were often seen attending the Anglican church, and his children were baptized there.³⁵

Between 1781 and 1801, West completed eighteen paintings for the Royal Chapel and a nineteenth that was unfinished. They were very large with twelve of them over twelve feet tall. The chapel scheme as envisaged by the king and West was never installed. The plan expanded and changed from a group of sixteen paintings to anywhere from twenty-six to thirty-six.³⁶ It was at this time in 1801 that West was informed by the king's architect James Wyatt that he was to stop work on the project. There were several reasons that could have been instrumental in the disintegration of the relationship between West and George III. The king had become ill in 1788 and his mental and physical condition varied from good to bad until his death in 1820. Another factor was that Wyatt had taken West's place in King George's confidence. Also according to

³⁴ von Erffa and Staley, *The Paintings of West*, 90.

³⁵ Farington, 8:245.

³⁶ von Erffa and Staley, *The Paintings of West*, 577.

Farington, West was upset because the king had been told of the artist's views on democracy.³⁷

Beginning in 1782 and continuing through 1790, West was involved in a very large number of commissions. In 1782 or 1783, West also began his design work for the St. George's Chapel stained glass windows. The altarpiece and designs for these windows in the chapel were large, powerful, dramatic, and consistent with the Baroque style West was using in the late 1780s. Four of the windows were completed but destroyed in the mid-nineteenth century.³⁸ His work for the Audience Chamber began in 1786, and during the next three years he completed for this room eight large paintings, the subjects drawn from the life and reign of the fourteenth-century King Edward III. The Queen's ceiling decorations were allegorical celebrations of up-to-date scientific, technological, and commercial events again in a lively Baroque style. They and the lodge were destroyed in 1823. During this time West also completed a commissioned painting for Lord Seaforth, *Alexander III of Scotland Saved from a Stag*, 1786, and the first of two large paintings for Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery, *King Lear in the Storm*, 1788.³⁹

Sometime in 1782 West received the commission for a very large altarpiece to be installed in the chapel at Greenwich Hospital, now the Royal Naval College. An oil sketch of the subject was exhibited in the Royal Academy show in 1787. Because of the enormous number of commissions West was working on during the late 1780s, he relied

³⁷Ibid., 97.

³⁸Ibid., 90.

³⁹Ibid., 100.

heavily on studio assistants John Trumbull, Gilbert Stuart, Richard Livesy and his two sons, Raphael and Benjamin, Jr., to help him complete the paintings.⁴⁰

Between 1786 and 1789 West only exhibited three paintings in the Royal Academy exhibitions and these were all related to his large commissions. However, during the next twelve years he sent a total of ninety-nine paintings for exhibition and they consisted of smaller, more marketable pictures and included some portraits, genre and landscapes.⁴¹

In October of 1791, Joshua Reynolds resigned from the presidency of the Royal Academy due to poor health and appointed West to act as a deputy until he recovered. However, Reynolds died in February 1792. The academy members held a special meeting on 17 March 1792, to elect a new president. John Copley put his own name forward, which some members thought was unbecoming of him. William Chambers presided and West was elected president by a vote of twenty-nine to one, with no abstentions.⁴² He was re-elected every year until the end of 1805 when harsh disagreements occurred among the members, including charges about West that he was not doing his duty as president and also that he had lost the king's confidence. West decided to resign and James Wyatt was elected president for the year 1806. It became evident quickly that Wyatt was not a competent leader. One particularly disappointing feature of his presidency, voiced by many of the members, was the annual Academy dinner at which the food was cold, bad, and too expensive. Besides that, Wyatt's address

⁴⁰Ibid., 100.

⁴¹Ibid., 111.

⁴²Alberts, 192-93.

was so low it could not be heard. By the end of the year the members had asked West to return. He agreed to a one year term only, but the members brought him back every year until his death in 1820.⁴³

In the last two decades of his life West painted several very large religious works and exhibited them for the public at 125 Pall Mall, a former home of the Royal Academy. Admission was charged and thousands of visitors came to see them. Critics praised very highly the smaller preparatory sketches, which were approximately three to four feet in size. However, they consistently criticized his enlargements, such as *Christ Rejected* at sixteen by twenty-one feet. His lively brushwork and unified composition disappeared when expanded six to seven times larger. One critic said that a masterpiece in the small scale became a 'three-acred piece' when enlarged.⁴⁴

West continued to paint new works and rework old paintings until his death on 10 March 1820, two months after the death of his friend and patron, King George III. After obtaining the consent of West's family and a proclamation from King George IV, the Academy held a public funeral. His body lay in state in the Royal Academy's great room for the members to view before he was buried with great ceremony in St. Paul's Cathedral next to Sir Joshua Reynolds. West was eighty-one years old and a last survivor, along with George Dance, of the thirty-six original members of the Royal Academy.⁴⁵

⁴³Ibid., 330-31.

⁴⁴von Erffa and Staley, *The Paintings of West*, 14.

⁴⁵Alberts, 4.

So ended the life of Benjamin West, a man of humble American birth, strict religious beliefs, limited formal education--but a man who had studied and trained in Italy--captured the imagination and support of all he met. Any of these characteristics that appear to be negatives he used to his advantage in becoming one of the eighteenth century's most influential American artists.

Stylistic Development

West, throughout his life, painted in a variety of styles. Influenced by his strong moral background and inspired by his three years in Italy, Benjamin West's early style and subjects were indebted to the artists whose works he had studied and copied in Italy: Titian, Correggio, the Carracci, Guido Reni, and Domenichino. Although West never left the influences of these artists, a new direction began in 1764 when he painted *The Choice of Hercules*, a work dependent on a picture with the same subject by Poussin, which West had seen when visiting Stourhead the previous year. Another change was signalled in 1766 by a painting of a subject from Roman history, *Paetus and Aeria*, in which he looked to two artists who were both indebted to the passion for classical antiquity voiced by Johann Winckelmann, Mengs and Gavin Hamilton. West continued to grow in his interpretations and as Staley remarks, West "had gone on to develop a consistent, compelling and convincing Neoclassical language distinct from that of either."⁴⁶ It was also the first work he had completed since his early *Death of Socrates* that used as a subject an actual event from history and also one that taught a lesson in virtue. It was in

⁴⁶von Erffa and Staley, 46.

similar models of moral behavior taken from classical antiquity that artists looked to for subjects during this time of the Enlightenment, as a reaction against the frivolity of the Rococo and the excesses of the courts.⁴⁷ Around this time West was also completing paintings with subjects from mythology but his ultimate goal was to paint serious history paintings and many of them echoed works by Poussin. Galt, in his biography of West, describes the conversation West had with King George III when he showed him the painting *Agrippina Landing at Brundisium with the Ashes of Germanicus*. West commented that he was surprised that Poussin had not used this subject as it would have been well suited to his genius.⁴⁸ West had probably seen Poussin's *Death of Germanicus* and this encounter may have partially influenced him to attempt the Agrippina painting. There are also references to the composition and style of Raphael, from his tapestry cartoons, which West had seen recently, and classical quotations of figures from sculptural reliefs he had seen in Italy.⁴⁹

The great Renaissance artists' work in Rome that he viewed and copied, such as those of Michelangelo and Raphael, were equally important in the development of West's style. Along with the evidence in his paintings of the vitality and strength of these two great artists, his works express the dynamic light and theatrical drama of the Baroque artists, such as Bernini and Rubens. This duality of static serene qualities along with the dynamic and emotional characteristics that occurred from the sixteenth to the seventeenth

⁴⁷Ibid., 42.

⁴⁸John Galt, *The Life, Studies and Works of Benjamin West, Esq.* 2 vols. (London: Cadell and Davies, 1816-1820), 25.

⁴⁹von Erffa and Staley, *The Paintings of West*, 44.

centuries, is expressed by West and his contemporaries again in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, only interpreted in a new way.

In the 1770s, as West continued to experiment with new ideas, his style became more flexible and he adapted his technique to the individual painting. The *Death of General Wolfe*, in 1770, was one of his first radical departures from the current, accepted artistic practice. Its quotation from Van Dyck's *Lamentation* brought West's work close to the energetic Baroque of Rubens along with the restrained, classical Baroque of Poussin. As Staley suggests, this shift was not a definite change in style but evidence of his ability to be increasingly flexible, not only in choice of subjects, but in style.⁵⁰ For example, in 1772 he painted *The Cave of Despair*, a work based on the English poet Edmund Spenser, which was a dramatic change from any previous painting. It is a perfect example of the sublime, a current theory of the psychological response to a threatening event which evokes awe and terror in the viewer. This concept was explained by Edmund Burke in his popular book *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* published in 1757, and it became an important part of the Romantic period in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. West did not stay with this overly sublime style for long, but it did show a change in the attitude of his heroes. His previous classical history heroes like Regulus acted on their high moral convictions and became models of exemplary behavior. The main characters in *The Cave*

⁵⁰Ibid., 76.

of Despair and *Saul and the Witch of Endor* show weakness and frailty in the face of forces beyond their control.⁵¹

In many of his future works, West used a lively brushstroke and his compositions referred back to the Baroque. However, past artistic giants were not the only ones who influenced his paintings. He continually assimilated and adapted ideas from his contemporaries like Joshua Reynolds, John Flaxman, Thomas Gainsborough, Gavin Hamilton, John Mortimer, Henry Fuseli, and James Barry.⁵²

West did not paint in just one style at any point during his life. He experimented constantly and his great ability to adapt the style to the subject enabled him to alternate regularly throughout his entire life. His total *oeuvre* consists of subjects from history, mythology, literature, the Bible, portraits, landscapes, and genre.

In the Chapel of St. Peter and St. Paul at the Royal Naval College, although his subject matter was limited to religion, his stylistic fluidity was evident. It ranged from the Neoclassical in many of his evangelist figures, pulpit and reader's desk drawings, and the statues, to the Baroque and sublime in the altarpiece, *St. Paul Shaking the Viper from His Hand after the Shipwreck*. These styles and subjects will be explored in subsequent chapters.

⁵¹Ibid., 82.

⁵²Robert Rosenblum, "Review of *Benjamin West and the Taste of His Times*," *Art Bulletin*, March 1960, 78.

CHAPTER IV

THE ROYAL NAVAL COLLEGE CHAPEL

Benjamin West's altarpiece of 1789, *St. Paul Shaking the Viper from His Hand after the Shipwreck*, and other decorative works designed by him are located in the Chapel of St. Peter and St. Paul, The Royal Naval College, in Greenwich, a borough of London, England. The chapel was built as one part of a complex of buildings to be used as a Royal Hospital for Seamen founded by King William and Queen Mary in 1694.

History of the Greenwich Chapel

The earliest history of Greenwich, located six miles southeast of London, can be traced back to Roman coins found on the site dating from 35 B.C. to A.D. 425. The area was named Grenavic, or Green Village, by the Saxons who farmed the land after the Romans left and it was under the authority of the British King. In 918 King Alfred the Great's daughter gave a large amount of property at Greenwich to the great Abbey of St. Peter at Ghent in Flanders.¹ The property remained under the Ghent Abbey until 1414 when the land was taken back by Henry V during the war with France.²

¹Olive Hamilton and Nigel Hamilton, *Royal Greenwich* (London: The Greenwich Bookshop, 1969), 179.

²*Ibid.*, 184.

Henry V's brother Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, obtained the manor from the king. After the death of Henry V in 1422 Humphrey became Regent of England and five years later built on the river the first palace in Greenwich, which he named Bella Court.³

In 1445, Henry VI married Margaret of Anjou, a selfish and ambitious woman, who was a niece of the French Queen. She encouraged her husband to arrest Humphrey for treason in 1447, and after his death in prison she took over Bella Court and renamed it the Palace of Pleasaunce or Placentia. Edward IV made Placentia his home in 1461, improving and enlarging it. The palace passed down eventually to Henry VII, and in 1491, Henry VIII was born and raised at Greenwich, as were his daughters Mary and Elizabeth. It was at this time that Greenwich began an association with the Navy as King Henry VIII built naval dockyards nearby at Deptford and Woolwich.⁴

Elizabeth I used Placentia as one of her main residences. After she died in 1603 the throne of England and Placentia passed to James VI of Scotland, by right of his great grandmother Margaret Tudor, daughter of Henry III.⁵ He then became James I and ruled over both Scotland and England. His wife, Queen Anne of Denmark, commissioned the building of the Queen's House, which later became the focal point of the historic buildings there. Inigo Jones received the commission in 1616 and proceeded to design a

³Ibid., 185.

⁴Allan Scott, *The Royal Naval College Greenwich* (West Yorkshire: Larkfield Printing Company Ltd., 1987), 1.

⁵Hamilton, 211.

Palladian villa, influenced by his recent travels to Italy.⁶ Queen Anne of Denmark died and Charles I's wife became the first occupant of the villa.

In 1664 Charles II decided to tear down the old Placentia and build a new palace. He commissioned John Webb, the pupil and nephew of Inigo Jones, to design a King's House closer to the river. He continued the Palladian style begun by Inigo Jones in the Queen's House, but only one wing was completed by 1669 due to lack of funds.⁷

Almost two decades passed and the building remained incomplete when William and Mary succeeded to the British throne in 1688. Following the 1692 victory at La Hogue in the war with France, Mary suggested building a naval hospital for retired and disabled seamen, their wives and children, upon Charles II's foundations in Greenwich.⁸ Queen Mary desired to put them "in a probable way of ending their Days in the Fear of God. . . . For want of a safe harbour, wherein they might anchor, and an Asylum wherein they might repose, after fatigues, hardships and dangers which they had encountered, few only escaped from the accumulated distress of poverty, infirmity, and pain."⁹

Christopher Wren, the King's Surveyor General, designed the hospital--donating his services free--and on 30 June 1696, he laid the foundation stone. He was assisted in his work by Nicholas Hawksmoor, past Clerk of the Works at Kensington.¹⁰ This complex of stately buildings combined the energies of three great architects, Wren,

⁶Ibid., 2.

⁷Ibid., 66.

⁸John Cooke and John Maule, *An Historical Account of the Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich* (Greenwich, England: Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich, 1789), 42.

⁹Ibid., viii.

¹⁰Hamilton, 66.

Hawksmoor and Sir John Vanbrugh, who succeeded Wren as the King's Surveyor General. It was a magnificent Baroque design, but it was not what Wren had originally planned or desired it to be. His first plan consisted of a long horizontal building facing north to the river with a grand central hall and chapel topped by a large dome. However, this plan blocked any view between the Queen's House and the river Thames and consequently Queen Mary rejected it. So Wren compromised and split his design into four separate buildings. The southwest building became the King William block, which contained the central hall. Across a narrow court on the southeast was built the Queen Mary block that contained the chapel, making the Queen's House the axis of the design. Charles II's building remained next to the river on the northwest corner, and across a wider court was built the Queen Anne block. Colonnades run southward on the exteriors of these four blocks leading rhythmically to the majesty of the Queen's House, leaving an unobstructed view of the river.¹¹

Later Hawksmoor and Wren's successor at Greenwich, Sir John Vanbrugh, both drew up revised plans to improve the composition by adding a large Baroque central feature. Hawksmoor even suggested adding a third story to the Queen's House. But Queen Mary would not give in; she insisted on a view of the river and even after her death in 1694, her will was still followed.¹²

¹¹John Harris, "The Architecture of the Williamite Court," in *The Age of William III and Mary II Power, Politics and Patronage*, eds. Robert P. Maccubbin and Martha Hamilton-Phillips (Williamsburg, Virginia: The College of William and Mary, 1989), 232.

¹²Hamilton, 67.

Construction began again on the hospital and the Royal Hospital Chapel was completed in 1752. The final interior appears to have been designed by the hospital surveyor Thomas Ripley as it was different from all earlier plans. Its final dimensions were very similar to the Painted Hall across the courtyard. The west entrance was an octagonal vestibule with stone stairs leading to the galleries and topped by the cupola. The main chapel hall had a flat coffered ceiling with an open apse at the east end. Installed in the west end was apparently one of the best organs in England at that time.¹³

In January 1779, a fire destroyed the interior of the chapel leaving only the walls and stone stairs intact. James "Athenian" Stuart, the classical revivalist and author of *Antiquities of Athens*, who had succeeded Ripley as Surveyor to the Hospital in 1778 was given the job of rebuilding the chapel. He had the help of his Clerk of Works, a position held first by Robert Mylne and later by William Newton. Stuart, who was almost seventy years old and known for his dilatory and unreliable nature, quickly clashed with Mylne, a distinguished man of talent who had a quick temper. When Stuart failed to produce detailed drawings for the work, Mylne furnished his own so the work could begin. The two continued to clash and the governing board became irritated at the delay and fired Mylne in September 1782. He was replaced by William Newton whom the board had already hired seven months previously to help Stuart.¹⁴

¹³Stuart Thompson, *The Chapel Royal Naval College, Greenwich* (Watford, Great Britain: Woodmansterne Publications Ltd., 1989), 1.

¹⁴Lesley Lewis, "The Architects of The Chapel At Greenwich Hospital," *Art Bulletin* 29 (1947): 261.

A decision had been made to preserve the proportions and the outstanding features of the previous chapel. They did change the apse at the east end and the flat coffered ceiling which became a shallow, Robert Adam-style ornamented vault. The interior design is attributed mainly to Newton, as Stuart left the execution of it to him. Newton stated that Stuart designed the ceiling, the frame for Benjamin West's painting, the balcony balustrades and a few decorative motifs and the remaining designs were his. Newton's signature as "architect" appears on the west door.¹⁵

The chapel (fig. 1.) is a reflection of both men's ideas, as Newton took bands of ornament directly from Stuart's *Antiquities of Athens* and he said himself after Stuart's death that the decoration was in the classical style "agreeable to Mr. Stuart and myself."¹⁶ However, Newton's influence probably determined a more ornamental style than one by Stuart. Newton was an excellent draftsman, a Palladian with a tendency to use elaborate ornamentation. The new interior was in the popular Greek revival design with light, pastel colors and graceful detailed plaster decorations similar to Adam or William Kent.¹⁷

The ceiling was redesigned after the fire from a flat to a vaulted one divided into three compartments. It is decorated with plaster work in rosettes, foliage and guilloches in the antique style in blue, cream and white.

With the reconstruction planning underway, a competition was announced for the painting of an altarpiece to be installed at the east end behind the pulpit. The commission

¹⁵D.E. Strong, " 'Athenian' Stuart And The Chapel Of 1789," in *A Short Guide To The Chapel Of St. Peter & St. Paul*, Rev. Basil Watson (Greenwich, England: Royal Naval College, Greenwich, 1955), 22.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 23.

was originally given to John Copley by John Montagu, Lord Sandwich, former first lord of the Admiralty. West was not content with this decision and either went to Lord North, according to *The Morning Herald*,¹⁸ or to the king directly, according to another newspaper,¹⁹ to have the decision reversed in his favor. His reasons are not known, but Alberts, in his biography, suggests that everyone knew that Sandwich's administration was very corrupt and West had already given Copley the lead in doing the *Death of Chatham* and possibly felt enough was enough. West, King George's history painter since 1772, asked the king for permission to paint the death of William Pitt, the Earl of Chatham. Pitt, who had sympathies for the American colonies but opposed their independence, had collapsed while speaking during a debate in the House of Lords in 1778 and died one month later.²⁰ West completed a small preliminary painting, *Death of the Earl of Chatham, 1778*, now at the Kimbell Art Museum, Ft. Worth, Texas. John Copley, an American artist whom West had befriended and advised, had arrived in London in 1775, after a one-year Italian tour. He also painted an oil sketch of Chatham's death and, according to Horace Walpole, West did not finish his intended painting in order not to interfere with his friend Copley, who intended to paint a very large picture. It was also known that Copley was in trouble on his eighteen by twenty-five foot *Siege of Gibraltar*, a commission given to him by the Corporation of London and one that West

¹⁸William T. Whitley, *Artists and Their Friends in England 1700-1799*, 2 vols. (London: Medici Society, 1928; reprint, New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968), 2:48 (page references are to reprint edition).

¹⁹*Press Cuttings from English Newspapers on Matters of Artistic Interest 1686-1835*, 6 vols. (London: Victoria and Albert Museum), 2:340.

²⁰Helmut von Erffa and Allen Staley, *The Paintings of Benjamin West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 218.

and lost. The Corporation officers were complaining that Copley's picture did not cover all the action, a problem that West had proposed solving by painting two pictures, and consequently Copley was redesigning the work.²¹

West's Chapel Commission

The date for the commission is probably 1782. During that year when Mylne, the Clerk of the Works under Stuart, was working on the reconstruction of the chapel and using Stuart's drawings, West asked for his own drawings to be returned so he could show them to "His Majesty with the sketch of his picture inserted in its place."²² Whether this was the time when West was working on taking the commission from Copley, or whether he was just showing it to the king after receiving the commission is not known.

In the east end behind the altar is the large painting by West representing *The Preservation of St. Paul from Shipwreck on the Island of Malta*, later called *St. Paul Shaking the Viper from His Hand after the Shipwreck*.²³ On the wall above the framed altarpiece is a grisaille painting of the *Ascension*, designed by West and executed by Biagio Rebecca, completing the theme of the life of Christ in the series of sixteen roundel paintings surrounding the chapel on the first floor. On each side of the arched frame of the altarpiece are lifesize angels by John Bacon molded from Coade stone. One is bearing the Cross and the other the emblems of the Eucharist.²⁴ In 1789, a large pulpit with a reader's desk was installed in front of the altar. Between the six fluted columns on

²¹Robert C. Alberts, *Benjamin West* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978), 185.

²²Lewis, 202.

²³Cooke and Maule, 104.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 105.

the pulpit are six low relief roundels in Coade stone designed by West, their theme taken from the Acts of the Apostles. The reader's desk has four columns and four Coade stone roundels with low relief sculptures of four Old Testament prophets, also designed by West.

Between the upper windows and pilasters are recesses in which appear fourteen grisaille paintings on canvas of the Apostles and Evangelists. They were designed by West and completed by Biagio Rebecca, as were four circular paintings of four major Old Testament prophets located over the upper gallery doors.²⁵

At the chapel entrance are two "great mahogany doors - unparalleled in this time or country," as stated in the original chapel guidebook.²⁶ The west portico has six fluted marble Ionic columns fifteen feet high which support the organ gallery that is crowned with an entablature and balustrade. On both sides of the organ are four Corinthian columns twenty-eight feet tall with shafts of scagliola, imitating Siena marble, by Richter. These are repeated at the opposite end supporting the arched ceiling and framing Benjamin West's altarpiece.

On each side is a gallery between the upper and lower windows. The side pilasters, cantilevers and entablature are decorated with angels and foliage, oak-leaves, tridents and wreaths, dolphins, shells and marine ornaments in the Greek mode.

In the lunettes above the lower windows under the gallery are sixteen roundels representing some of the main events in Christ's life from birth to death. They appear to

²⁵Ibid., 107.

²⁶Ibid., 101.

be in bas relief, but are actually painted in grisaille on copper plates by four artists:

Biagio Rebecca, Theodore DeBruyn, Charles Catton and Milbourne.²⁷

The octangular vestibule has four niches with statues of Faith, Hope, Charity and Meekness, later referred to as Innocence, sculpted from designs by Benjamin West.

Fourteen steps lead to the chapel, one hundred eleven feet long and fifty two feet wide, which could accommodate one thousand pensioners, nurses, boys and some naval officers.²⁸

The first sermon was delivered in the new chapel by the Reverend John Cooke on 20 September 1789. The chapel was used regularly by the naval pensioners and the boys from the naval school, in the Queen's House, from 1789 to 1869. At that time the Greenwich Pensioners Hospital was closed. The Admiralty Board created the Royal Naval College and designated the Greenwich Hospital buildings to be used by the college. From 1873 until the present the chapel has been utilized by the naval officers and their families.²⁹

The next four chapters will investigate different facets of the chapel: the altarpiece, grisaille paintings, pulpit and reader's desk reliefs, and the statues.

²⁷Edward Croft-Murray, *Decorative Painting in England 1537-1837*, 2 vols. (Feltham, Middlesex: The Hamlyn Publishing Group Ltd., 1970), 2:54.

²⁸Cooke and Maule, 100.

²⁹Thompson, 1.

CHAPTER V

THE ALTARPIECE

The altarpiece that West completed for the chapel, *St. Paul Shaking the Viper from His Hand after the Shipwreck* (fig. 1.), commands the center of attention in its position on the east wall of the chapel behind the altar. West selected a religious theme, appropriate to the purpose of the chapel, a subject with historical precedents in England and other areas of Europe. In preparation for the altarpiece West drew four sketches, a finished drawing and an oil sketch. The final painting is a combination of West's artistic background as he incorporated several styles in an innovative manner, reflective of the trends of the eighteenth century.

Subject of the Altarpiece

The subject for the painting revolves around the narrative of an event in the life of Saint Paul. The narrative is taken directly from the Bible, Acts 28:1-6, and concentrates on an event that occurred near the end of Paul's ministry. He was accused and arrested by the leaders of the Jewish group in Jerusalem for bringing Gentiles into the temple, which was a capital offense under Jewish law. He was sent before the governor, Felix, in Caesarea and imprisoned for two years. Being a Roman citizen Paul appealed to Caesar and was consequently put on a ship for Rome, along with some other prisoners,

under the authority of Julius, a Roman centurion. The vessel sailed below Crete and encountered bad weather. Paul's advice to put into port so as not to endanger their lives and lose the cargo went unheeded as the centurion chose to listen to the owner of the ship who thought they should continue. After passing Crete a strong wind began to control their direction, and for two weeks the ship and over two hundred passengers aboard were at the mercy of the sea. Paul assured them they would all be safe, since an angel had brought him this message. Eventually the ship ran aground on the island of Malta, or Melita, as it was earlier called. The weather being rainy and cold, the islanders built a large fire, to comfort those from the shipwreck, and as Paul and the others gathered close he grabbed a bundle of sticks and laid it on the fire. At that moment a viper leapt out and fastened on his hand. The natives, knowing Paul should be dying, were amazed to see him with no ill effects and promptly declared him a god.

The selection of this event from the life of Paul as the subject for the altarpiece was important for two reasons. First, Paul was the main figure in the Anglican hierarchy of saints paralleling the role of Peter in the Catholic church. Second, the shipwreck of Paul on the island of Malta represents a double rescue for the viewer. The survivors, including Paul, are deposited unharmed and safe on the island after a disastrous storm; and second, there is Paul's miraculous delivery from death after the bite of a poisonous snake. The intended purpose of the chapel was to provide a haven for naval personnel who were living their last days in the sanctuary of the Pensioner's Hospital after a life of hardship and danger. The *Microcosm of London* wrote in 1789 that this scene was a "subject

admirably calculated to impress the minds of seamen with a due sense of past preservation, and their present comfortable situation and support in the noble asylum which the bounty and gratitude of the country have prepared for them.”¹ Therefore, in selecting this scene, West chose a narrative that suited the purpose and mood of the chapel’s intent. It was also one that suited his own interest in art; which was a desire to evoke an emotional response, the sublime, by the enormous spectacle of the power of nature, the possibility of destruction, and dramatically, the power of the Christian faith.

In reviewing West’s artistic development from its beginning, one sees that his relatively delicate classical work in the 1760s had gradually moved toward a more monumental style in painting. The king had asked for themes of loyalty, valor and honor, like the *Departure of Regulus from Rome*, 1769, or *The Oath of Hannibal*, 1770. West continued to paint classical subjects throughout his career but other subjects began to dominate. He expanded into current historical subjects and medieval historical ones, concentrating on British history. West was not the first to attempt this type of subject. The Society of Arts from 1759 to 1777 sponsored an annual competition for “the best original Historical Picture, the subject to be taken from the English History only.”² Many of his contemporaries, such as Angelica Kauffmann, preceded him in British subjects in 1770 and 1771.

¹John Dillenberger, *Benjamin West* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1977), 103.

²Helmut von Erffa and Allen Staley, *The Paintings of Benjamin West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 68.

West had to adopt an accepted formal language for these works. In 1770, in *The Death of General Wolfe*, he looked to the *Lamentation*, 1634, by Anthony Van Dyck. While his earlier works looked to the classical Baroque of Poussin, an artist West greatly admired, these new paintings had a dynamic Baroque quality as his style began to resemble that of Rubens, as in *Alexander III of Scotland Saved from a Stag* of 1786. West continued to experiment and expand his stylistic development without ever completely abandoning his old methods. As discussed in Chapter III, he also painted more exciting and horrific narratives that were examples of sublime scenes, a current eighteenth-century aesthetic direction accepted as a goal of a work of art being done by contemporaries such as Henry Fuseli and John Hamilton Mortimer.³

The theme of Paul's shipwreck on Malta was not one of the most popular Pauline narratives, but the history of the subject does go back almost to the beginning of Christian art. The earliest recorded work of this topic is a fresco from the fifth-century, in the Paolo Church in Rome.⁴ The next known painting, a twelfth-century fresco, became an historical precedent as it is located in the chapel of St. Anselm, Canterbury Cathedral, England. This painting shows Paul, with a bundle of sticks in his left hand, bending over the fire from which a viper rises toward his right hand.⁵ Also in the collections of many European museums are illuminated manuscripts, from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, that depict this event.

³Ibid., 79.

⁴*The Index of Christian Art* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University, 1917).

⁵Lois Lang-Sims, *Canterbury Cathedral* (London: Cassell Ltd., 1979), 88.

Beginning again in the sixteenth century, the event was depicted by artists from the Netherlands, such as the engraver Hendrick Goltzius. Also around 1600 the German Adam Elsheimer painted *Paul and the Viper* in oil on copper, which is presently located in the London National Gallery. In 1735 an Italian, Giovanni Paolo Pannini, painted an oil on canvas now in the Wellington Museum in London.⁶ Andor Pigler lists many artists in Italy and France who also painted the scene during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.⁷ One of West's contemporaries, Phillip de Loucherbourg, completed a painting of the *Shipwreck of St. Paul* and also one of *The Deluge*, 1788; both subjects also completed by West.⁸

The most significant precedent for the subject could have been viewed by West in London's St. Paul's Cathedral. In 1721, Sir James Thornhill painted in grisaille eight scenes from the life of Paul on the inside wall of the dome. Included in the group was the painting *St. Paul Shipwrecked on Malta*. According to Lindsay Stainton, Thornhill borrowed extensively from the seven Raphael tapestry cartoons on display at Hampton Court.⁹ However, the narrative of Paul's shipwreck was not included in Raphael's tapestry scenes, and therefore Thornhill's design for the event was either from another source or an original idea. His painting depicts Paul on the shore with five fellow survivors gathered around watching as he shakes the viper from his hand back into the

⁶*Subject Catalogue of Paintings in Public Collections* (London: Visual Arts Publishing, 1989).

⁷Andor Pigler, *Barockthemen*, 3 vols. (Budapest: Akademiai Kiado, 1974), 1:398-399.

⁸Nancy L. Pressley, *Revealed Religion: Benjamin West's Commissions for Windsor Castle and Fonthill Abbey* (San Antonio, Texas, 1983), 27.

⁹Lindsay Stainton and Christopher White, *Drawing in England from Hilliard to Hogarth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 232.

fire. The ship's bow looms very prominent and fills most of the background space. West possibly obtained his idea for the theme of the Greenwich altarpiece from Thornhill, but the two compositions are totally different. West's composition is larger and more complicated with fifty figures, whereas Thornhill's contains only six. Similarities are evident in the stance and drapery of the figure of Paul in both paintings, which include Paul's standing position with his weight on his left leg and his right knee bent. His right arm is extended out and down with the snake wrapped around his hand in the Greenwich picture, but in Thornhill's scene the snake is falling into the fire. Paul's robes in both scenes are similar in appearance in length and drapery folds. The decorative baroque manner in which Thornhill painted the St. Paul dome is reflected in the Greenwich altarpiece of Paul, as one of the styles West incorporated into his decorative chapel scheme.

The sources West utilized were drawn not exclusively from existing paintings and sculpture available in England, or from his extensive sketchbooks completed in Italy, but were often the result of studying his own large collection of Old Master drawings and paintings. Recorded in the auction sale on the twenty-third and twenty-fourth of June 1820, after West's death, are many of the items from his collection of Old Master drawings and paintings. They included works by the Italians Baroccio, Correggio, Giorgione, Reni, Parmigianino, Raphael, Tintoretto, Titian, and the three Carracci relatives, Agostino, Annibale and Ludovico. Also he had bought French paintings by Poussin and Claude; Flemish works by Sir Anthony van Dyck, David Teniers, and

Rubens; Dutch paintings by Ruisdael and Albert Cuyp; Spanish by Ribera and Murillo, and the Englishmen he collected were Alexander Cozens and his son, John R. Cozens.¹⁰

West also owned two volumes of drawings by the Italian Fra Bartolommeo and is known to have borrowed from them extensively.¹¹ This combined supply of artistic efforts enabled West to extract ideas from a great variety of stylistic sources, resulting in the diversity of styles employed in his works.

Preparatory Drawings

There are five of West's preparatory sketches in existence that give evidence of how much thoughtful effort and study preceded the execution of a large canvas of this complexity. They also show us how West succeeded in bringing order and balance into the energy of his vision and the profusion of figures and motifs, thereby producing a composition which can be seen at a glance. He originally conceived the event as a horizontal scene with more of a classical orientation as seen in a drawing in the Art Institute of Chicago. Paul is placed on the left side of the page and his left arm is extended over the fire. In this early drawing five figures are shaded in and the rest are loosely drawn. Most of them are lined up close to the front of the picture plane with only a few preliminary lines for the landscape and figures ascending the right side. Its composition resembles that of *Saint Paul on Malta*, c. 1600, done by the German artist Adam Elsheimer, in that they are both scenes in which all the action takes place on the

¹⁰Algernon Graves, *Art Sales from early in the Eighteenth Century to early in the Twentieth Century*, 3 vols. (New York: Burt Franklin, reprint 1970, original 1917), vols. 1, 2 & 3.

¹¹Chris Fischer, *Fra Bartolommeo* (Rotterdam: Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, 1990), 15.

flat land next to the sea. Elsheimer's figures are smaller but line up across the front by the sea with a rocky monumental mountain in the background and trees and foliage on the right side.

The drawing that seems to be his next progression is in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. West has included more solid and shaded figures and Paul is on the right side with his right hand extended over the fire, in a pose that remains essentially unchanged in the final version. The scene is still horizontal and fairly quiet as several people gather on the beach around him.

In the third drawing, from the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, West has changed to a vertical format with figures in the foreground, middle and background, as seen in the final version. It also shows West's habit of adding strips of paper to widen his composition.¹²

Boston has a fourth drawing which further refines his ideas, adds more detail, and rounds the top to fit the architecture of the chapel. It corresponds in general to the finished painting but does not include many of the final figures. In each succeeding drawing, West has gradually built up the depth of space and emotional drama by adding increasingly stronger washes. The lines West used are not firm, straight, or defined but look very loose and nervous with a lot of movement and jerky lines.

The final drawing that West completed is located in the Maritime Museum in Greenwich, England (fig. 2.). It is sixty-seven centimeters high by thirty-seven and one-half centimeters wide, done in pen and ink with a grey wash used for shading. His lines

¹²Esther Sparks, "St. Paul Shaking Off the Viper," Chicago Art Institute *Museum Studies* 6 (1971): 63.

are also more finished and smoother, defining the exact figural and subject forms. There is no signature or date, however, it corresponds exactly to the finished oil sketch and final painting with only very minute differences.

In 1787, West exhibited a *modello*, a finished oil sketch, at the Royal Academy's yearly show entitled *The Shipwreck of St. Paul*. It is 51-by-20 1/2 inches, and is signed in the lower right corner, "B. West 1786." A newspaper clipping in Anderdon's Annotated Catalogue Scrapbook from 1787 made the following comment about West's finished sketches exhibited recently. "They are the *St. Paul at Melita* and *The Order of the Garter Instituted by Edward III*. They cannot be praised too much, and they shall be praised more. As shall not be any one of the large historical pictures - they are, we fear, all detestable."¹³ This writer stated a common view held during West's lifetime, that his oil sketches were more admired than his very large finished works. The sketch is currently in the Tate Gallery in London. At the time of West's death, it was still hanging in his private gallery.¹⁴ It corresponds very closely to the finished Greenwich painting with only a few differences. Paul's head has a slightly different position and there are a few more people added to some of the groups.

Description of the Painting

The finished altarpiece in the Greenwich chapel is twenty-five feet high, fourteen feet wide and consists of three principal groups with a total of around fifty people. West brings us into the scene from the lower left corner (fig. 3.), where the wrecked ship can be

¹³James H. Anderdon, ed., *Anderdon's Annotated Catalogue Scrapbook* (London, 1850-75).

¹⁴von Erffa and Staley, *The Paintings of West*, 386.

seen through a gap in the rocky hill, with men coming through the water and up the shore. The marines and prisoners in the lower left side are all carrying bundles from the ship, seemingly unaware of the drama unfolding above them. The composition and figures in the lower third of the painting are still in West's early Italian style. They are posed, clearly defined, muscular, and expressionless. These men can be identified as reminiscences of works of art West had studied so faithfully in Italy. Traces of Michelangelo are seen in their muscular vigor as this center kneeling man especially recalls the unfinished bearded slave for Julius's tomb or the torso of the father in the *Laocoon*, a sculpture West greatly admired as being "appropriate in character to subject united with correctness of outline."¹⁵ The man in the bottom center is kneeling with his right arm over his head, lifting a large bundle in which a metal vase or pitcher can be seen. The half-naked bronzed bodies of the lower figures stand out in relief against the shaded forms surrounding them.

The guidebook written in 1789 for the refurbished chapel describes the rest of the lower group as follows:

Near these is an elegant figure, supposed to be a Roman Lady of distinction, clasping with affection an Urn containing ashes of her deceased husband who had fallen in the wars of Judea. Before her is an aged, infirm man, who, being unable to assist himself, is carried in the arms of two robust young men.¹⁶

¹⁵John Galt, *The Life, Studies and Works of Benjamin West, Esq.* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1816-1820), 152.

¹⁶John Cooke and John Maule, *An Historical Account of the Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich* (Greenwich, England: Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich, 1789), 104.

This woman in her stoic dignity reminds us of West's figure of Agrippina in his picture *Agrippina Landing at Brundisium with the Ashes of Germanicus*, 1768. In the Swarthmore, Pennsylvania collection of drawings by West, is a pen and ink drawing of Agrippina carrying an urn of ashes that is similar to the mourning woman in the Greenwich painting. The use of this woman and urn along with the group of two women and a child seen in the upper right side, are in subject and style classical elements introduced in a nostalgic manner that demonstrate the stylistic complexity within the Romantic Movement where Neoclassical and Baroque factors coexisted.

In this section of the painting I feel there is evidence of the inclusion by West's assistants of their own portraits. To the right of the group with the old man is a face peering from the shadows, with no clothing or hat to be seen, and it appears to be a portrait of John Trumbull. In comparing this face with the portrait of Trumbull painted by Stuart, with Trumbull's help, in 1781, one can see identical features in the hairline, nose and chin line.¹⁷ Another factor leading to this conclusion is the fact that in West's final drawing for the altarpiece there is no face present in this particular place. Another familiar face, which resembles Gilbert Stuart, can be seen farther up the right side as the outermost young islander bringing wood for the fire. West does have a man as an islander in the final drawing but the facial features in the finished painting are different from the drawing. Compared to a self-portrait painted by Stuart in 1778, there is a great similarity between the features of his mouth, eyebrow and nose line, and the features of the islander

¹⁷Dorinda Evans, *Benjamin West and His American Students* (Washington D.C.: National Portrait Gallery, 1980), 74.

in the painting.¹⁸ These two men and probably West's two sons, Raphael and Benjamin, and another student, Richard Livesly, were known to have been West's assistants during the 1780s, and some or all of them undoubtedly worked on the Greenwich picture.¹⁹ Stuart, however, left for Dublin in October of 1787 to work for several years. The *modello* for the painting was exhibited at the Royal Academy show in 1787, but the altarpiece was not completed until the fall of 1789. There is no record, but it is possible that West and his assistants began it in 1787 before Stuart left. It is known that Trumbull was still assisting West in 1789, as were West's two sons. If Stuart did not work on the painting, it is still possible that Trumbull or West added Stuart's portrait to the canvas. Stuart and Trumbull were known for adding their portraits to West's pictures they helped paint, such as *Institution of the Order of the Garter*, 1787, and *Moses Receiving the Laws*, 1874.²⁰

The middle, and principal group of people, is focused around the fire, shown as a bright light radiating from the center of the painting. Its glow reflects on the two women and one child to the right of Paul as they huddle together out of fear or awe. Above them are four islanders bringing more bundles of wood for the fire. Both groups range in age from young to old and display strong emotions of wonder in their facial expressions.

Saint Paul stands above the fire, the reflection lighting up his face and figure. His

¹⁸Ibid., 54.

¹⁹von Erffa and Staley, *The Paintings of West*, 100.

²⁰Ibid., 300.

right arm stretches out toward the flames as the viper hangs from his hand. His left hand clutches a tall tree limb for a staff. West pictures Paul as unafraid, forceful, confident in his faith and belief in his God.

On Paul's right side stands his friend the centurion, the Roman soldier responsible for delivering Paul to Rome safely. To the left of the centurion is a group of thirteen men, of whom nine appear to be soldiers.

West was known to have completed very detailed research for his historical paintings and even complained about the amount of time he spent researching costumes and settings.²¹ Joseph Farington wrote on 15 December 1805, of a conversation he had with Sir George Beaumont after West had resigned from the presidency of the Royal Academy, "Sir George said West was the most scientific artist that had appeared since Nicolo Poussin."²²

The evidence of this effort can be seen in the historical accuracy of the uniforms of the soldiers in the painting. The centurion in the Roman army was one of the most responsible officers in the legion, a man in charge of one hundred soldiers. He was distinguished from the men under him by his dress. He wore a corselet of mail and a cloak of fine material over his shoulders, which is red in the painting.²³ His helmet in the picture has a plume on the top, he is carrying an oval shield, and in his right hand he

²¹Helmut von Erffa, "Benjamin West at the Height of His Career," *American Art Journal* 1 (1969):20.

²²Joseph Farington, *The Farington Diary*, Edited by James Greig, 8 vols. (London:Hutchinson, 1922-28, original diary, 1821),6:2661.

²³Graham Webster, *The Roman Imperial Army* (London: A & C Black Ltd., 1979), 30.

holds a tall spear or lance. To the left of the centurion is a line of four uniformed soldiers. They are each wearing a coat of upper body armor of metal strips fastened together with leather over their shoulders. In addition to the metal strips there are authentic scale-shaped pieces on the front of the armor and around their necks is a scarf to protect against chafing. Their helmets are rounded with a extra bill on the front and metal cheek pieces in front of their ears.²⁴ Also plate fourteen, in the *Roman Soldier*, shows a soldier from Trajan's Column wearing a helmet and armor identical to the three soldiers in line. Three of these four have removable plumes which fit into a slot on the top of the helmet. The fourth soldier in this line and also the one in the lower left of the picture have a different but authentic style helmet. It is hemispherical in shape with a reinforced bill from the front to the back and has a round knob on the top.²⁵

Below this line of four are two soldiers who are called standard bearers. Each is carrying the long standards present in each unit of the Roman army. These standards performed two functions; one as a recognition signal, and two, as a rallying point for the men.²⁶ The upper man is the senior standard bearer, as he is carrying the Eagle Standard. At the top is the majestic eagle, the most common animal or bird used because of its association with the god Jupiter.²⁷ The second standard has a red flag at the top. The standards were typically decorated with *phalerae*--circular metal discs given as awards to

²⁴Ibid., 126.

²⁵Lino Rossi, *Trajan's Column and the Dacian Wars* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1971), Plate 30:83.

²⁶Webster, 133.

²⁷Ibid., 135.

individuals or whole units and decorated with miscellaneous designs-- crowns, ship prows, *torques*--metal neck or arm pieces-- rectangular units that look like a piece of a wall, and lunar crescents.²⁸ West's standards are decorated with a variety of these symbols. His standard bearers are also dressed authentically with animal skins over their uniforms. The head of the animal, either a lion or a bear, is placed over their helmet, a former Celtic practice.²⁹

To their right is a group of three men whom I believe to be soldiers because two of them are carrying shields. They are not dressed in armor or helmets, but wear loose fitting tunics on the top and the man farthest to the right is also wearing knee breeches. Historically there were soldiers, such as archers and infantrymen, who wore this type of clothing.

West has given the soldiers shields of three different shapes; oval, tile shaped and rectangular, all accurate according to Roman history. The decorations on these shields are very hard to discern in the painting because of the darkening of the paint, but the symbols can be seen in West's final drawing. They consist of a central knob, from which a long spiral form extends from top to bottom. On both sides are thunderbolts, with lateral arrow-headed zigzag flashes of lightning, and eagle wings. These were commonly used by the Romans to represent supreme power, again related to Jupiter.³⁰

²⁸Ibid., 132.

²⁹Ibid., 139.

³⁰Rossi, 108.

Filling the upper third of the picture, as described by Cooke and Maule in their guidebook of 1789, is a scene of "Figures on the summit of the rocks, and consist of the hospitable Islanders lowering down fuel and other necessaries for the relief of the Sufferers."³¹

As seen in its entirety the painting is a complicated and closely organized group of interlocking figures. Its dynamic composition is Baroque in style as it is accentuated by the strong diagonal movement beginning with the lower left and moving to the upper right. The other dominant feature West uses is the dramatic use of chiaroscuro. A strong light that originates in the fire in the center of the picture radiates to the surrounding figures, increasing the sculptured sense of the group represented in front of the large neutral areas of rocks and clouds. This firelight also accents the staircase effect of the strong diagonal line.

Beside the fire stands the apostle Paul, snake in hand, a dominant but not overpowering presence in the total scene. The light on Paul's face reveals an expression of calmness, assurance in the face of disaster, and a sense of strength that is meant to assure the mariners and their families of the power and protection of God in this holy sanctuary. All the patches of color are set into motion by rapid transitions of tones, while the golden light, flowing from the center, unifies the whole with a single vibrant emotion.

Several of the figures' gestures and many of their facial expressions are reflective of the powerful passions that came from the Baroque period of Rubens. This emotionalism

³¹Cooke and Maule, 104.

expressed in current or historical natural events was drawing on a precedent which began in the Renaissance and continued in many artists' work from the middle of the seventeenth century to the middle eighteenth century.

West often incorporated his past experience into his present work, in combination with the current themes of the eighteenth century such as the sublime. The composition and division of this picture bring to mind a painting discussed by West in a discourse he delivered on 10 December 1811, while he was president of the Royal Academy. It was Bartolomeo's *Assumption of the Virgin Mary*, which West had seen in Lucca, Italy, in 1762 during his student days prior to settling in London to launch his career in August of 1763. His comment on this work was:

When we consider the combination of excellence requisite to produce the sublime in painting; the union of propriety with dignity of character; the graceful grouping; the noble folding of drapery, and the deep sumbrous tones of the clair-obscure, with appropriate colours harmoniously blending into one whole; --if there is a picture untitled [sic] to the appellation of *sublime*, from the union of all these excellences, it is that which I have described: considered in all its parts, it is, perhaps, superior to any work in painting, which has fallen under my observation.³²

Style and Sources

West used in this altarpiece, as he had in the past, these individual borrowings and expressed them in an entirely personal manner. It was a synthesis of his career up to this time beginning with the classical figure of the mourning woman with her husband's

³²Galt, 160.

ashes. Clearly evident are the passionate gestures of Raphael, the musculature of Michelangelo, Caravaggio's powerful tenebrism and Titian and Rembrandt's shimmering touches of light. In spite of the fact that such borrowings were the standard practice of the day in academic art circles, and by no means unique to West, there are special similarities between the Greenwich altarpiece and the Bartolomeo *Assumption of the Virgin* discussed above. They are comparable in size, strong contrast of light and dark, and in composition consisting of three principal groups. Perhaps the high praise West paid Bartolomeo's picture, and the obvious parallels between it and the Greenwich altarpiece, provide a valuable insight into how West sought to achieve a sublime message in his painting of St. Paul and the viper.

West was a great admirer of the artists of Venice and spent a lot of time studying the Venetian Secret, the unknown means by which these artists, especially Titian, achieved great beauty in their color. There is no record of West's exact method of applying the paint to this picture and it has darkened considerably with age in spite of repeated cleanings before 1950.³³ However, the colors are very harmonious and at the same time rich in contrasts, reminiscent of artists whom West studied and admired such as Caravaggio, Titian, Rembrandt and Rubens. As many of West's pictures of the 1780's became more turbulent and expressive, correspondingly his colors were dominated by gradations of warmer tones in harmonious transitions from light to dark, displaying the depth of emotions present.

³³Basil Watson, *A Short Guide to the Chapel of St. Peter & St. Paul* (Greenwich, England: Royal Naval College, Greenwich, 1955), 2.

In the fall of 1789, West finished and hung the completed altarpiece. He had corresponded twice with J. Ibbetson, a member of the Commissioners and Governors of Greenwich Hospital, concerning the completion of the painting. In the first letter, he asked for a scaffold so that he could put the finishing touches on the painting. He felt these had to be added after the work was hung, in order to harmonize with the prevailing light.³⁴

There is an interesting story recorded by Joseph Farington, concerning the amount of money West received for the altarpiece. He recorded in his diary that at 2:00 P.M., Saturday, 3 March 1804, a group of people arrived at the home of Benjamin West. Sir Edward Knatchbull and his attorney, the artist John Singleton Copley with his son and attorney, and the referee Mr. Burroughs. They came to solicit West's testimony in order to help settle a legal dispute between Sir Edward and Copley over the length of time it was taking Copley to complete Knatchbull's family portrait and also over the amount of money to be paid. During the hearing West was asked what the size and price were for his Greenwich painting. He responded that it was twenty-seven feet high by sixteen to eighteen feet wide and contained about fifty figures, the largest of which was eight feet high. West also said he was given twelve hundred pounds and thought himself well paid. Copley's son then asked West whether he had made a sketch for the Greenwich picture and how long it took him to complete. West replied that he did paint sketches and the one for Greenwich was in his gallery and it probably took him ten days to paint.³⁵ West

³⁴ von Erffa, "Benjamin West at the Height of His Career," 25.

³⁵ Farington, 2259.

concluded his testimony by saying he judged the work, put into the Knatchbull group and its proper price, by comparing it to the payment Copley received for a single portrait which was 120 guineas. Therefore, an ample payment would be fourteen hundred guineas. The hearing continued into the evening even though West left his house after he announced that he had a dinner invitation with the bishop of Durham and the bishop never waited dinner past 5:30 P.M. There is no record of the decision of the judge.³⁶

In January of 1795, just over five years after completion of the project, Farington recorded that West received thirteen hundred pounds, instead of twelve hundred pounds, for his large picture in the Greenwich chapel and upon finishing his work had given a dinner at Greenwich for many gentlemen belonging to the hospital.³⁷ Regardless of the actual amount, West appeared to be pleased with the finished product. It was not long before he had made arrangements with Francesco Bartolozzi, one of the most accomplished Italian engravers working in England at this time, to complete an engraving after the painting (fig. 4.). In the Greenwich Marine Museum is a copy of this engraving and it is signed, "by F. Bartolozzi, Historical Engraver to His Majesty January 1, 1791." The engraving measures eighty-eight by forty one centimeters.

St. Paul Shaking the Viper from His Hand after the Shipwreck is an excellent example of the flexibility West utilized in many of his works, drawing from his observations of great art from the ancient Classical period, the Renaissance and the Baroque periods. He synthesized and added to these reflections producing a new

³⁶Robert C. Alberts, *Benjamin West* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978), 301-302.

³⁷Farington, 285.

eighteenth-century expression which became a part of Romanticism. This work is the only finished work of art in the Royal Naval College Chapel completed by West.

However, he was commissioned at the same time to complete drawings for nineteen additional paintings, ten low-relief sculpted roundels, and four sculptures to be completed by other artists and installed in the chapel. These artworks are the subject of the following three chapters.

CHAPTER VI

THE GRISAILLE PAINTINGS

Within the chapel is a group of nineteen paintings in grisaille, designed by West but painted by Biagio Rebecca. Included in the nineteen is one of the ascension of Christ, fourteen are of the Apostles and Evangelists, and four are of Old Testament personalities. There are an additional sixteen on the lunettes above the windows of the lower gallery and were the only works of art which West did not receive the commission to design. For fifteen of these nineteen biblical paintings there are extant drawings located in two collections, which will be discussed in terms of their subject matter, their style and sources, and the influences from the past and the present that shaped West's work at this point in his career. There exists a central theological theme that defines the purpose of all the chapel's ecclesiastical decorative artworks which will be addressed in the Conclusion, Chapter IX.

The Ascension

Above the altarpiece and located in a low arch between the cornice and the ceiling is a grisaille, the *Ascension* (fig. 5.), completed by Biagio Rebecca after a drawing by

West. In the original guidebook to the rebuilt chapel, written in 1789, the author states that this picture became the last of the series on Christ's life.¹

The drawing for the *Ascension* is a part of the collection of West drawings owned by the Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. It is 12 1/2-by-5 5/8 inches, done in pen and brown ink, brown wash and graphite and entitled *God the Father* (fig. 6.). The drawing includes the top curving lines of the altar painting and the horizontal lines for the cornice. In this drawing, Christ is ascending into heaven in the midst of clouds and rays of light. Only his upper torso is seen, as his clothing and clouds cover his legs. His arms are outstretched with his face upturned. On both sides are groups of putti looking on, two on the left and three on the right. There are similarities between the figure of Christ in the drawing and the painting, *The Ascension*, that West completed for the Windsor Chapel scheme in 1782. Christ is in a similar position with his arms raised, but the difference exists in the mood of the drawing. The Greenwich drawing shows Christ's hair blowing all in one direction as are the draperies around his lower torso, and the extension of his arms is greater. This feature, plus the radiating lines streaming from his body to the surrounding clouds, produces great energy and excitement. The same type of wild, wind-blown hair can be seen on many of West's figures beginning in the late 1770s, at a time when his work was beginning to show not only more energy and movement but experiments into narratives that displayed the

¹John Cooke and John Maule, *An Historical Account of the Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich* (Greenwich, England: Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich, 1789), 105.

sublime, or stirring historical events where emotions were prominently displayed. This style was not an invention by West but it was both a reflection of paintings he had seen during his Italian journey and contemporary artistic themes by artists such as John Mortimer, Henry Fuseli, and William Blake, who incorporated horrific scenes into their paintings.

West was a great admirer of Raphael and commented in one of his discourses to the Royal Academy on the “dignity and...enlargement of style” in the *Expulsion of Heliodorus*, 1512.² Similarities can be seen between Raphael’s angelic messenger in this painting with his swept back hair and robes and wide spread arms and legs, and many of West’s figures. He was adopting some of the characteristics of Raphael that he evidently admired, ones that when transferred into the eighteenth century seemed right at home.

Another very strong influence in West’s life was the artist Fra Bartolommeo. West owned two volumes of the sixteenth-century artist’s drawings which he had purchased in England, sometime after returning from Italy in 1763.³ One of them was *Two Studies for Christ*, with two sketches of Christ in very similar poses to the Greenwich painting and may have been an inspiration for West’s *Ascension*.⁴ The Swarthmore drawing may not have been the final drawing for the grisaille painting, because it is not a finely finished drawing as are his ones of the Apostles and Evangelists. Correspondingly there is more difference between the final painting and this preparatory

²John Galt, *The Life, Studies and Works of Benjamin West, Esq.* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1816-1820), 162.

³Chris Fischer, *Fra Bartolommeo* (Rotterdam: Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, 1990), 15.

⁴*Ibid.*, cat. # 86.

drawing. Whereas Christ's hair has the typical wind-blown appearance in the drawing, in the painting he has traditional long smooth hair. It is also possible that Rebecca elected to make this change.

The Apostles and Evangelists

The fourteen drawings for the figures of the Apostles and Evangelists are in the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, England. The subjects for these and the remainder of West's chapel designs, excluding the four upper story round paintings, have been included in various original lists of West's works. However, none of them has ever been discussed in detail or pictured in a published work.

The drawings for the Apostles and the Evangelists are in pen and brown ink, with a brown wash. All except two are dated 1788. One, St. James Minor, has no date, and St. Phillip is dated 1789. All are signed, "B. West," with the exception of St. James Minor, which has no signature. They are all finished drawings, firmly drawn, with decisive contour and detail lines and defining washes for shading. The top of each drawing is rounded to fit the design of the arch of the recessed niche. The finished paintings on canvas appear as sculpted statues in recessed niches between pilasters.

The Apostles' and Evangelists' figures and clothing are classical in origin, appropriate to their original time period of the first century, but they are also softened and fuller in keeping with the High Renaissance artists whom West studied; Michelangelo, Correggio, Raphael and Bartolommeo, as well as the Venetian masters. Again West's interest in Bartolommeo is evident. He stated in a discourse given in December, 1811,

that Bartolommeo in his painting of St. Mark, “convinced us how important and indispensable is the union of mental conception with truth of observation, in order to give a decided and appropriate character to an Evangelist of the Gospel.”⁵ Not only was West impressed by the expressive characteristics of Bartolommeo’s figures but also by their clothing. It was known that he studied and used Bartolommeo’s draperies extensively. There is a great deal of similarity in style between West’s draperies on the Apostles and Evangelists and Bartolommeo’s, but they are not copied. This reverence for the artist’s work continued until West’s death. John Thomas Smith, keeper of the British Museum’s prints, called on West in March of 1820, as he was not in good health. West was lying on a sofa in the front drawing room. One of the volumes of Bartolommeo’s drawings lay open on a small settee by his bed, arranged so that he could look through the pages while he was lying down. Four days later he died.⁶

Biagio Rebecca, the Italian artist commissioned to paint the *Ascension*, the Apostles and Evangelists and the four upper gallery recessed rounds, followed West’s drawings very closely including the exact drapery folds. Only in two areas can a slight change in execution be observed. The evangelist in each finished painting has a slightly fuller body than in the drawing. The second difference is more interesting and significant. The faces in West’s drawings show more expression than the final paintings. His eyes, eye brows, and mouths give a more serious, energized, and sometimes

⁵Galt, 158.

⁶Robert C. Alberts, *Benjamin West* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1978), 3.

distressed appearance to the figure. Rebecca has smoothed out these expressions so that they are calm, thoughtful, more classical in appearance and expression. Three of the figures in West's drawings--Matthew, John, and Andrew--exhibit expressions that are more animated than a typical classical painting or sculpture.

In all three West has drawn their heads slightly turned to the side, eyes looking up and hair flying out in the back. This feature gives them a great feeling of energy and excitement, a typical eighteenth-century sublime appearance or a referral again back to some of the Renaissance artists, such as Raphael or Correggio, whom West studied so carefully. There is a drawing by West entitled *Standing Male Nude* in the collection of drawings at the Pierpont Morgan Library, that depicts a man with his head and hair in this same position, which demonstrates again that these animated expressions, in body language and facial expression, were not part of an isolated style that West used only in Greenwich, but was an attempt to give character and emotion to historical figures and events wherever it was appropriate.

All of the figures except the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, are standing in a contrapposto position with either their right or left knee bent. The four evangelists are all sitting down but in a variety of positions.

During the 1780's as West was working for George III on designs to renovate the Windsor Castle Royal Chapel, he completed a ceiling design which included four squares

with one of the four evangelists in each square.⁷ There are four drawings in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Library that are possible preparatory sketches for this ceiling. Each evangelist is seated on a rocky formation and, although not in the same positions as the Greenwich drawings, which are dated 1785, there are many similarities in style. Each evangelist's attribute, the man, ox, lion, and eagle is very similar in appearance and in the same location on the page in relation to the evangelist.⁸

Most of the fourteen evangelists are pictured with one or two of their traditional attributes, with a couple of exceptions. Except for John, who holds a book, each holds in one of his hands a scroll, symbolizing their missionary zeal and their writings.

Beginning at the southeast corner of the chapel nearest the altarpiece is St. Matthias (fig. 7. and fig. 8.), who replaced Judas, the betrayer, in the original group of twelve apostles. In his right hand is a staff with a scrip or wallet, hanging from it. His normal attribute is an ox or halberd but this staff and scrip evidently refer to his missionary or pilgrim status along the Caspian Sea.

St. John holds a pen in his right hand, high over his head, and a book in his left arm (fig. 9. and fig. 10.). His traditional symbol, the eagle, is in the lower right corner. St. Thomas is usually carrying a carpenter's rule, but West depicts him unrolling a long scroll (fig. 11.). Rebecca has also added a club under his right arm evidently to symbolize his legendary martyrdom in India (fig. 12.).

⁷Helmut von Erffa and Allen Staley, *The Paintings of Benjamin West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 579.

⁸Stanley Weintraub and Randy Ploog, *Benjamin West Drawings* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Museum of Art, 1987), 33 & 34.

St. Jude carries in his left hand the traditional lance for his death in Persia (fig. 13. and fig. 14.). St. Simon holds a long saw, related to a legendary story from *The Golden Legend* about his being sawn in half (fig. 15 and fig. 16.). St. James Major carries only the scroll in the drawing (fig. 17.) but in the final grisaille, Rebecca has added what appears to be an afterthought, namely an ax over his left arm, symbolizing his death for his faith (fig. 18.).

St. Luke sits with his head resting against his right hand (fig. 19. and fig. 20.). At his lower left is the traditional ox. This animal is almost identical to the ox by the side of Luke in the painting by Correggio of Saint Ambrose and Luke in a pendentive of the Saint Giovanni Evangelista church in Parma, a city to which West traveled while in Italy in order to study the great artist's work.⁹ A strong similarity can also be seen between the pose and musculature of West's Luke and one of Correggio's Apostles in the cupola of this same church in Parma. Both artists looked to the Laocoon for inspiration.

Continuing on the other side of the chapel in the northwest corner is St. Matthew (fig. 21. and fig. 22.). He is seated and writing with a pen onto an unrolled scroll on his lap. His face is turned to his left and his left arm is up, as he looks at the flying angel behind him. Matthew's left leg is the reverse copy of a sketch of a leg by West in the Pierpont Morgan Library Collection. This drawing was labeled as a study for the right leg of Achilles. West's painting *Thetis Bringing the Armor to Achilles, 1805*, does use this leg pose and it is interesting to note that West used this same position or variations of

⁹Cecil Gould, *The Paintings of Correggio* (London: Faber & Faber Limited, 1976), Plate 71 B.

it in many of his works, including some before the Greenwich commission. According to Ruth Kramaer, the author of the book on the Pierpont Morgan Collection, it is a reverse drawing of one in an academy drawing book, 1813, used by the Royal Academy students which contained examples by West.¹⁰ The reverse drawing is also a copy of the right leg of the center man in the *Laocoon*, the mid-second-century B.C. statue that West studied and copied in Rome.

St. Phillip is holding a cross representing his travel to Scythia where he preached and was martyred on a cross, possibly upside down (fig. 23. and fig. 24.). St. Peter is shown with his typical short curly hair and beard and holding his attribute, the keys, in his right hand (fig. 25. and fig. 26.). The figure of St. Andrew, Peter's brother, is resting against a saltire or X-shaped cross, the type upon which he was crucified, probably in Greece (fig. 27.). The only information about St. Bartholomew (fig. 28. and fig. 29.) is told in *The Golden Legend*. He preached in India and died in Armenia by being flayed alive, hence the bare torso and knife as his attribute.

The next figure is St. James Minor (fig. 30. and fig. 31.), who was the brother of Jesus. He is seen in his traditional status as a young man with long hair and no beard. Information on James is scarce also but *The Golden Legend* states that a man clubbed him with a fuller's staff, killing him. Another tradition states that he was killed with a hatter's bow. However, West substituted a tall halberd, an attribute not normally used for him.

¹⁰Ruth Kraemer, *Drawings by Benjamin West and his son Raphael Larmar West* (New York: The Pierpont Morgan Library, 1975), 47 & plate 79.

St. Mark, the Evangelist (fig. 32. and fig. 33.), is seated on rocks while he rests his head on his left hand. His right hand holds an unrolled scroll on his lap symbolizing his writing. He was a traveling companion of Paul and also was known to have written down Peter's teachings. His attribute, the lion, is resting at his feet in the lower right corner.

Four Major Old Testament Figures

Above each of the four second floor gallery doors is a recessed round painting in grisaille designed by West and painted by Rebecca. The subject matter of these round paintings consists of four of the most important major figures from the Old Testament. Three are on canvas but one is painted directly on the wall.¹¹ There are no known drawings for these four figures. However, the guidebook published for the reopening of the chapel in 1789, after the great fire, lists them, along with the Apostles and Evangelists, as being designed by West and painted by Rebecca.¹² The later guidebook published after the conclusion of the restoration of the chapel in 1955, also states that they were by West and Rebecca.¹³ Edward Croft-Murray, in *Decorative Painting in England 1537-1837*, lists them under Rebecca's works.¹⁴ Dillenberger in his book on West has compiled all the known early lists of West's works from *La Belle Assemblée*,

¹¹Basil Watson, *A Short Guide to the Chapel of St. Peter and St. Paul* (Greenwich, England: Royal Naval College, Greenwich, 1955), 13.

¹²Cooke and Maule, 107.

¹³Watson, 13.

¹⁴Edward Croft-Murray, *Decorative Painting in England 1537-1837*, 2 vols. (Feltham, Middlesex: The Hamlyn Publishing Group, Ltd., 1970), 2:259.

Galt II, Public Characters, 1805, and the 1807 publication of *Columbiad*. None of them mentions these four roundels, probably because there were no drawings to list.¹⁵

Pictured in the northeast corner, to the left of the altar painting, is Moses (fig. 34.), the deliverer, leader, and lawgiver of Israel from c.1520 B.C. to c.1400 B.C. He is depicted as an old man with a long beard in a seated position, facing front. He is holding in his right arm a large tablet and over his left arm rests a long rod. From his head radiate two rays of light that derive from the Vulgate's use of the word *cornutam*, meaning horned, to describe Moses' face when he descended from the mountain with the tablets of the Law; "the skin of his face shone," or "flashing with rays of light."¹⁶

The position of Moses' legs as he is seated is very similar to the painting of *Saint Mark* by Fra Bartolommeo, who is known to have referred to Michelangelo's Sistine *Ignudi*. The upper body of Moses could be compared to Michelangelo's statue of Moses. West usually did not borrow a whole figure but would combine different ideas to develop his own distinctive representation.

To the right of the altarpiece, in the southeast corner, is Isaiah (fig. 35.), the greatest of the Hebrew Old Testament prophets, who lived in the eighth century B.C. He chastised the people of Judah for their way of living and also prophesied of the coming of the Messiah. He is seated and wearing traditional robes including a drape over his head. He has a short beard and is holding a long unrolled scroll across his lap, his accepted

¹⁵John Dillenberger, *Benjamin West* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1977), 129-215.

¹⁶James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects & Symbols in Art* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 213.

attribute. Unlike the other three roundels which are painted on canvas, this one was painted directly on the wall.¹⁷

The third circular painting is to the left of the great organ in the southwest corner. It pictures Israel's greatest king, David (fig. 36.), who lived in the eleventh and tenth centuries B.C. His clothing is a draped robe with a flowing cape on his back. David is seated sideways and is shown with his two attributes, the crown on his head and a large harp.

On the right of the organ, in the northwest, is Jeremiah, the second of the great prophets in Judah. He lived in the seventh century B.C. and spent his life warning the people of Judah to repent of their sins. He is seated facing forward and casting his eyes downward as is typical for a sorrowing prophet. On his lap is a scroll, symbolizing the author of the book of Lamentation, as his traditional attribute.

The seated positions of these four figures--Moses, Isaiah, David, and Jeremiah are relatively calm and traditional. West could have used a variety of his own drawings or could have drawn from life to model these three figures. Although West's original drawings are not available to study or do not exist, the paintings are probably a close copy of them, if we take into account Rebecca's very accurate renditions of West's drawings for the Apostles and Evangelists.

¹⁷Watson, 8.

West's Drawing Skills and Artistic Philosophy

West's early training in art in Pennsylvania, as mentioned in Chapter III, was very limited. When he arrived in Italy, Anton Raphael Mengs, who was painting and teaching in Rome, asked to see some of West's drawings. West agreed, being very excited about this request from this well known artist. However, on the way to the hotel, he told Mengs that his drawings which he had brought from America were not impressing anyone and he knew he was deficient in his drawing ability because of his lack of anatomical study. He therefore proposed that he paint a portrait of Thomas Robinson, an Englishman who befriended West upon his arrival, and have Mengs judge that instead of a drawing.¹⁸ Mengs agreed and was impressed enough to enlist West as one of his students. During the next few years he studied diligently, first under Mengs for a year, and after arriving in London, he attended drawing classes at the St. Martin's Lane Academy.¹⁹ In 1768, when he was asked by Dr. Drummond, the Archbishop of York, to paint the story of Agrippina landing with the ashes of Germanicus, he was able to draw a satisfactory sketch in one evening.²⁰ His drawing technique and skill had greatly improved and continued to do so. During the next year, 1769, after being commissioned by King George III to paint the subject of Regulus leaving Rome, he would often visit with the king, discussing the approximately fifty drawings he had completed for the painting.²¹

¹⁸Alberts, 38.

¹⁹Ibid., 60.

²⁰William Dunlap, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Design in the United States*, 3 vols. (New York, 1834, New York: Dover Publications, 1969), 1:62.

²¹Alberts, 90.

West's philosophy of drawing is recorded by William Dunlap from a discourse to the students, after he was elected president of the Royal Academy:

to give heart and soul wholly to art, to turn aside neither to the right nor to the left, but consider that hour lost in which a line had not been drawn, nor a masterpiece studied. . . . Observe, with the same contemplative eye the landscape, the appearance of trees, figures dispersed around, and their aerial distance as well as lineal forms. If you aspire to excellence in your profession, you must, like the industrious bee, survey the whole face of nature and sip the sweet from every flower. When thus enriched, lay up your acquisitions for future use, and examine the great works of art to animate your feelings and to excite your emulation. When you are thus mentally enriched, and your hand practised to obey the powers of your will, you will then find your pencils or your chisels as magic wands, calling into view creations of your own to adorn your name and country.²²

He also told his students of the importance of mastering the human figure and used the *Apollo Belvedere* and the *Venus de' Medici* as the perfect models.²³

Ruth Kraemer states that West's drawings from the 1780's have very good draughtsmanship. He often used very precise details along with strong outlines and soft shadings.²⁴ West's drawings are not all finely finished, like the Greenwich apostles and evangelists. Many were copied from other works of art, drawn from live models, or sketched while observing nature. They vary in finish from being very sketchy with nervous lines to strongly drawn contours. The more finished drawings look like they are the labor of a man who has thought through his subject and has skillfully drawn from his heart and mind. Most of his drawings are not dated or signed. Many can be identified by their subject matter and others can be dated if they relate to one of his paintings.

²²Dunlap, 75-76.

²³Kraemer, 61.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 61.

During West's career, especially in the later years, he was sometimes criticized for his wooden figures or lack of feeling in his paintings, but never for his drawings or preparatory oil sketches, which were constantly praised.

Together, the *Ascension* drawing, the fifteen drawings of the Apostles and Evangelists, and the four paintings of the prophets after West's designs, combine to give us an insight into West's artistic goals and his ability to adapt his painting style according to the subject. His goal in art was, first of all, to paint history pictures. Within that framework, scriptural subjects provided the greatest truth, and figural representations from the Bible should convey an appropriate expression that provided moral guidance. Judged by these standards, West's expressive qualities seen in the poses and heads of his biblical personalities, demonstrate his striving to achieve his goals. His style was developed through his borrowings from the masters of the High Renaissance, the Baroque, and from his teachers and contemporaries like Anton R. Mengs and Gavin Hamilton, Henry Fuseli, John Flaxman, James Barry, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and William Blake. One of West's greatest gifts was his flexibility within his stylistic renderings throughout his life.

CHAPER VII

THE PULPIT AND READER'S DESK RELIEFS

In 1789, after the rebuilding of the chapel, the pulpit, with the reader's desk in front of it, commanded the center of attention in its position at the head of the aisle, directly in front of the altarpiece. It existed at this time as a 'three decker' structure, the taller pulpit and a shorter two-level piece, often referred to as the lectern and prayer desk.¹ Its large size was in direct proportion to the painting behind it and actually covered the lower center section of West's work. In 1855, it was divided and placed on both sides of the altar. By 1955, the pulpit was placed on the south side of the altar and the reader's desk was dismantled and then placed in storage.²

On the pulpit and reader's desk are ten medallions, sculpted out of Coade stone, after designs by West. Their subjects originated from the Bible and their style is consistent with the rest of West's work in the chapel in that his style varied with each scene according to the subject and mood he intended to portray. During this Romantic period, West, like his contemporaries, was influenced by the great Renaissance and Baroque masters and he borrowed extensively from their work. However, West did not

¹Basil Watson, *A Short Guide to the Chapel of St. Peter and St. Paul* (Greenwich, England: Royal Naval College, Greenwich, 1955), 7.

²Stuart Thompson, *The Chapel, Royal Naval College, Greenwich* (Watford, Great Britain: Woodmansterne Publications Ltd., 1989), 5.

paint exclusively in their style but was consistent in his flexibility of styles and was not afraid to be innovative if he thought a change was necessary to meet his goals. Some of the scenes of St. Paul and St. Peter invoke the sublime, the current eighteenth-century Romantic aesthetic encompassing terror, emotion and awe. These subjects did not originate in the eighteenth century but had been used in Christian art beginning in the first centuries after Christ's death. Their relationship to the Biblical theme of the entire chapel will be discussed in the conclusion.

The Pulpit Designs

The pulpit in the Greenwich chapel is of unusually large proportions, built in a circular design, and supported by six fluted columns. Above the columns is a richly carved entablature and between them are six medallions containing scenes designed by West and sculpted in high relief from Coade stone by Richard Lawrence. A large curved staircase descends from the door at the top down to the floor. Oak and mahogany are the principal woods used, but the carved portions, the columns and entablature, are of lime wood.³ Lawrence, the principal joiner for the chapel, carved the pulpit, the intricate staircase, and the Coade stone medallions for twenty-eight hundred pounds. He had also completed, at three pounds a foot, the carving and gilding of the altarpiece frame.⁴

Coade stone was an artificial stone manufactured in Lambeth, England, by a company founded by Mrs. Eleanor Coade and her father in 1769. The formula invented by either her father or her husband, was kept a secret then, and is still not known today. It

³Watson, 7-8.

⁴Thompson, 4.

was their policy to employ only first-class modellers, designers, and artists such as John Bacon, Charles Rossi, John Flaxman, and Thomas Banks, all of whom completed work for them.⁵

The Coade stone medallions, designed by West, represent six scenes about St. Paul and St. Peter from the book of the Acts of the Apostles. Drawings for these high relief sculptures are located in the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

The first drawing is the *Conversion of St. Paul*, from Acts 9: 3-7 (fig. 37.). It is signed, "B. West 1788 Windsor," completed in pen and brown ink, brown wash, and light blue wash. The scene is contained within a circle on a square sheet, 37-by-36 1/2 centimeters and squared within, in six centimeter sections.

Acts, Chapter 9, tells the story of Paul, a Jew and a Roman citizen, who had embarked on a journey to Damascus, with the blessing of the Synagogue leaders, to arrest any Christians whom he could find. On the road he was struck blind by a bright light from the sky, as God's voice spoke to him. In the drawing, West depicts the apostle Paul on the ground, having fallen from his horse, which is also on the ground and looking wildly at the sky. The position of Paul's legs is reflective of the *Laocoon*; his left leg resting on the horse's back and his right knee bent. He is wearing upper body armor over a tunic, a cape that is blowing up into the air and over the horse's back, Roman sandals on his feet, and a soldier's helmet rests on the ground. Behind his fallen body to the left are

⁵Rupert Gunnis, *Dictionary of British Sculptors 1660-1851* (London: The Abbey Press, 1951), 105.

four soldiers and another horse, while on his right is a running man, with his clothing flying wildly toward the puffy clouds that float in the sky. In one of West's drawings, *Deputation before a Roman Emperor*, his soldiers have the same uniforms and helmets as in the Greenwich drawing, although the composition itself is very calm and sedate with the figures lined up basically on a stage.⁶ The traditional classical composition contrasts with the Greenwich drawing as the latter appears very Baroque with its diagonals, energy and exaggerated theatrical drama. It even evokes the sublime in the facial expressions of the figures, who are reacting to the power of the supernatural. The turmoil and lively action in this drawing are reminiscent of a Rubens painting, with movement swirling in a circle from the flying draperies to the rays streaming down from the clouds to the apostle and his horse. Paul's horse seems to be a citation from Rubens.

Leigh Hunt's autobiography mentions the fact that West had only a few works by artists other than himself on the walls of his home in Newman Street, but he did have one of an engraving after Rubens's *Lion Hunt*.⁷ This would have been the, "The Lion Hunt, a print colored and touched upon in oil by Rubens, for the engraver to work from; very splendid and fine," sold by West's heirs in 1824.⁸

In the finished medallion (fig. 38.) Lawrence has followed very closely West's original sketch, with only minor differences in head and body positions.

⁶Benjamin West, Collection of West drawings, ink on paper, 1760's-1820, Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, # 55.

⁷Leigh Hunt, *Autobiography of Leigh Hunt*, 2 vols. (Westminster, London: Archibald Constable & Co. Ltd., 1903), 1:13.

⁸Christie's, London, 28 May 1824, lot 22, quoted in Helmut von Erffa & Allen Staley, *The Paintings of Benjamin West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 390.

All of the six Biblical narratives of St. Paul and St. Peter that West used for his pulpit scenes have a long and prestigious history as a pictorial theme. The account of Paul's conversion was a popular subject of Christian art in the Middle Ages, and between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries, many illuminated manuscripts used this story. It was also painted on predellas, and two examples, one now in the Staatliche Museum in Berlin, and another in Italy, by Lippo Vanni and Lorenzo di Bicci, both depict Paul in armor with his sword, surrounded by a group of soldiers.⁹ Recorded by Bartsch is a group of woodcuts, done by artists from the sixteenth century, including one by Grunewald and another by Albrecht Durer, which use Paul's conversion as a subject.¹⁰

The narrative for the next sculpture, the *Vision of Cornelius* (fig. 39.), is located in Acts 10: 1-48 and 11: 1-18. A Roman centurion, a God-fearing man, has a vision of an angel who speaks to him and tells him to send for Peter, who will tell him what he is to do. The drawing for this scene is signed, "B. West 1788 Windsor," and is drawn with pen and brown ink with a brown wash (fig. 40.). The paper is a 38 1/2-by-38 centimeter square with a circular scene, also squared.

Cornelius, dressed in a Roman tunic, is kneeling and resting his arms on a stand, upon which his helmet rests. As he looks back over his left shoulder, he is listening to an angel, who hovers near and slightly above him and who appears to be speaking to him.

⁹*The Index of Christian Art* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University, 1917).

¹⁰Warburg Institute, ed., *Index Iconologicus illustrating Adam von Bartsch's Le Peintre Graveur, Vienna 1802-1821* (Sanford, North Carolina: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1980, text-fiche), VII-311,333, 179-17.

The clothing and helmet of Cornelius are identical to the costumes worn by the soldiers in West's drawing *Deputation before a Roman Emperor*, as mentioned previously.

West completed many paintings, particularly Biblical scenes, that included angels. Most of their wings show a very close resemblance to the wings on the angel in a painting by Raphael, *St Michael and the Devil*, 1516-1519.¹¹ We cannot be sure whether West was exposed to this painting or not, but there is a drawing by him at Swarthmore College of *St. Michael and the Dragon*, in which the composition is similar, and one of St. Michael's wings appears to be identical to Raphael's.¹²

This drawing also depicts a great deal of energy in the arm and drapery movements, the facial expressions and the wing extensions, again drawing upon the prefigured romanticism that West saw in some of Raphael's and Correggio's paintings completed during the Renaissance.

In past art the *Vision of Cornelius* was not painted as often as Paul's conversion, but there are recorded scenes from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries in illuminated manuscripts. Also in France, in the Lady of Lourdes Chapel, Bourges Cathedral, dating back to the thirteenth century, is a stained glass window that incorporates this scene.¹³

The third drawing is for the medallion of *St. Peter Released from Prison* (fig. 41.). The book of Acts, chapter 12:5-9, tells the story about a time when Peter was imprisoned by Herod, King of Judea, for his Christian preaching and an angel from God rescued him

¹¹*The Complete Work of Raphael* (New York: Reynal & Company, 1969), 186.

¹²West, *Swarthmore Drawings*.

¹³*The Index of Christian Art*, Princeton.

from his cell. The drawing is signed, "B. West 1788 Windsor," and done in pen and brown ink, and brown wash (fig. 42.). The paper is square, 38 5/8-by-38 centimeters, with the scene in a circle.

Peter's legs are again in a position reminiscent of the *Laocoon*, a pose that West used in many paintings, and his body is leaning slightly backwards as if in amazement. The angel with arm extended, is pointing off to the right, as it descends within the clouds toward Peter and his wings are the same design as in the previous drawing.

His drawing vibrates with action and diagonal rhythm from the movement of the clothing and draperies, the forceful gestures and expressions, the flying hair, and the sweep of the wings. There is strong tension felt in Peter's body, as West had drawn his upper body moving back, while at the same time he gestures and pushes forward with his right arm. These theatrical gestures and twisting bodies remind us of the Baroque period and they also have the feel of the sublime. The finished sculpture captures this energy completely.

This narrative was also drawn in the past during the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries in illuminated manuscripts and in frescoes. In the Houel Cathedral of Peter and Paul, in Brandenburg, Germany, is a painted predella that includes three of the scenes from Acts. These scenes are the same as in Greenwich, including this story of Peter and two of Paul; his conversion and his preaching at Athens.¹⁴

¹⁴Ibid.

Acts 13:4-13 tells the story of the next drawing and medallion, *Elymas Struck Blind* (fig. 43.). Paul and Barnabas had journeyed to Cyprus to teach. The deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, became interested in what they were doing and asked Paul to come to his house to speak to him. Within the official's household was a Jew, Elymas, who was also a sorcerer. Elymas tried to prevent the deputy from accepting Paul's message, consequently Paul confronted Elymas and caused him to become blind. As a result of the power that Paul displayed, the deputy became a Christian.

The drawing is signed, "B. West 1788," and is drawn in pen and brown ink, brown wash, and light blue wash (fig. 44.). It is also a round drawing, squared, within a 37 1/2-by-37 centimeter square. West's drawing acts out accurately the biblical drama as Elymas and Paul become the center of attention. Elymas stands to the left of the center, arms outstretched, feet apart, knees bent, with his eyes closed and mouth open in astonishment or horror. Paul is on the right, with his left leg and right arm extended and his finger pointing as though he is exhorting the offender. He is wearing a long robe and holds a book in his left hand. Behind them, upon a raised platform, sits the deputy, while onlookers gather on both sides.

West's drawing of Elymas echoes Raphael's cartoon of the same subject very closely. Seven of the ten tapestry cartoons by Raphael, on the lives of St. Paul and St. Peter and commissioned by Pope Leo X in 1515, had been brought to London by Charles I and were housed in Hampton Court Palace. This was a visual source that was immediately at hand in England and shortly after West arrived in 1763, he traveled to see

them. In 1787, the cartoons were moved to Windsor, where West and his family were living, making them even easier to access at the time he was working on the Greenwich project.¹⁵ West reversed Raphael's scene and even though it is not a copy, the composition and the participant's poses and clothing are very similar. The drawing is again very dramatic, due to the forceful gestures of the figures, and the sculptor has followed West's drawing very closely.

This story of Paul was not as popular in the Middle Ages as other themes, but there are records of its use in illuminated manuscripts in the thirteenth century.¹⁶

The narrative for the fifth drawing for the medallion *St. Paul Preaching at Athens* is from Acts 17: 22-34 and tells of Paul's teaching in Athens. Some of the Athenian philosophers requested that he explain his views, which he willingly did from the top of Mars Hill, the meeting place of their court.

The drawing (fig. 45.) is signed, "B. West 1788 Windsor." It was done in pen and brown ink, with a brown wash, and is a circular drawing within a 38 1/2-by-38 centimeter square. Paul is standing to the left of center on a short platform with one column, dressed in long robes with his weight on his left leg and his right knee bent. He has a full head of hair and a long beard. Both arms are outstretched in an emphatic gesture and his mouth is slightly open as he speaks. Surrounding him is a group of men listening attentively, as they rest their heads on their hands or stroke their beards. There is one couple seated at

¹⁵Robert C. Alberts, *Benjamin West* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978), 59.

¹⁶*The Index of Christian Art*, Princeton.

his feet who appear to be in agreement with Paul. The man is holding up his hands, pressed together, and the woman has her head bowed while her arms are crossed across her chest.

The sculptured medallion in Coade stone (fig. 46.), is almost identical in design to the drawing with the exception of two additions. The column shaft is fluted, whereas West's was plain, and in the upper right corner the artist has placed the Parthenon in the Acropolis of Athens. The mood of the drawing is calm and classical, corresponding to the theme of the story.

In West's drawing of St. Paul in Athens, he is again recalling one of Raphael's tapestry cartoons, *St. Paul preaching at Athens*. The two compositions have many similarities: St. Paul on the left side on a stepped platform with a column behind him, the group of contemplating philosophers gathered around him, and the enthralled man and woman in the lower right corner.

In his biography of West, Galt recorded the text of a discourse given on 10 December 1811 to the Royal Academy. In this speech, West related his thoughts on Raphael's cartoons:

The transcendent excellence in composition, and in appropriate character to subject, in the cartoon of Paul preaching at Athens, has left us to desire or expect nothing farther to be done in telling this incident of history. In the composition of the death of Ananias, and in the single figure of Elmyas the sorcerer struck blind, we have the same example of excellence. We have indeed in many of the characters and groups in the cartoons, the various modes of reasoning, speaking, and truth, and so precise and determined in character, that criticism has nothing wherewith

in that respect to ask for amendment.¹⁷

However, West's St. Paul does not rely on Raphael but rather on the *Apollo Belvedere* for inspiration. West studied this antique statue very thoroughly while in Rome during the early 1760s, and incorporated the stance many times, as in his *The Savage Chief*, 1761. In the Friends Library at Swarthmore College is West's drawing of the *Apollo*. In the Greenwich drawing, he has even used a sweep of drapery over St. Paul's left arm, as part of his robes, that echoes the ancient statue.

From the tenth to the twelfth centuries, early Christian art utilized this story on illuminated manuscripts. Also in Brandenburg, Germany, it was painted on the predella in the Houel Cathedral, fourteenth century.¹⁸

The last drawing for the pulpit is entitled *St. Paul Before Felix* (fig. 47.). It is signed, "B. West 1788 Windsor," drawn in pen and brown ink, with a brown wash, a light blue wash and white highlights. Like the rest, it is a circular design on a square paper, 38 1/2-by-38 centimeters. The topic for this drawing is found in Acts 24: 1-27. Paul had angered a group of Jews, who subsequently captured him with the intent of killing him. After word reached the Roman authorities, their soldiers rescued him because he was a Roman citizen. They sent him to Caesarea to stand before the provincial governor, Felix. In West's drawing, Paul stands sideways, to the left of center, gesturing with both arms toward the governor, as though he were defending himself of the charges. He is dressed

¹⁷John Galt, *The Life, Studies and Works of Benjamin West, Esq.*, 2 vols. (London: Cadell and Davies, 1816-1820), 163.

¹⁸*The Index of Christian Art*, Princeton.

in long draped robes and he has short hair and a beard. Felix and his wife, Drusula, a Jewess, sit upon a short raised platform to Paul's right, listening to his speech. The governor wears long robes and a cape, that is clasped over his right shoulder. Upon his head rests a crown made from laurel leaves and in his left hand he holds a scroll. To the left of Paul, behind a short enclosure, sit several soldiers and a few other men who appear to be high Jewish officials. The finished medallion (fig. 48.) is very similar to the drawing and both exhibit more calm than the previous five drawings, however, Paul's emphatic hand gestures and his movement toward the platform provide a feeling of dramatic theater being executed. One of West's principles of drawing that all artists should follow was to use the appropriate physical expressions to fulfill a moral purpose. This goal is evident in all of his Greenwich drawings.

The references from the past that West appears to be using in this drawing are again from Raphael's tapestry cartoons. He cites the figure of Paul from Raphael's *The Blinding of Elymas* that he did not use in his drawing of the same subject. Raphael's Paul and West's Paul for the Felix drawing are almost identical in body and arm position, hair and beard, leg positions, and drapery folds. Also the official in both scenes has the same laurel crown and clasped cape, and is sitting on a similar platform surrounded by square floor tiles. Even though West greatly admired Raphael's cartoons, he did not copy him exactly but was adept and sufficiently innovative to borrow figures or ideas and use them differently.

The use of Raphael's designs in ecclesiastical commissions was not limited to West. Sir James Thornhill, who painted *Paul Shipwrecked on Malta*, 1716, in St. Paul's Cathedral, as mentioned in Chapter V, also used several of the same narratives from Paul's life; *Paul's Conversion*, *The Blinding of Elymas*, and *Paul Preaching at Athens*. Stainton comments that Thornhill's scenes at St. Paul's were not as good as his earlier work in the Great Hall in Greenwich, across from the chapel. He attributes this deficiency to the fact that Thornhill was requested to paint the scenes in grisaille and also that he relied too heavily on Raphael's tapestry cartoons for inspiration.¹⁹

The Princeton Index has record of a fresco from the fifth century of this subject located in a Paolo Church in Rome.²⁰ Several well known artists completed paintings of Paul before Felix; Hendrick Bloemaert in 1635, and Giovanni Tiepolo and William Hogarth, both in the eighteenth century.²¹

The Reader's Desk Designs

The Reader's Desk was designed on a square plan with columns for each of the four corners and a similar entablature to the pulpit. Between the four columns are four high reliefs, again sculpted by Lawrence from Coade stone, of four Old Testament prophets; Micah, Daniel, Zachariah--or Zechariah--and Malachi, all designed by West.²²

¹⁹Lindsay Stainton & Christopher White, *Drawing in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 237.

²⁰*The Index of Christian Art*, Princeton.

²¹Andor Pigler, *Barockthemen*, 3 vols. (Budapest: Akademiai Kiado, 1974), 1:398.

²²John Cooke and John Maule, *An Historical Account of the Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich* (Greenwich, England: Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich, 1789), 106.

These four drawings, like the previously mentioned ones, are also in the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich. They are similar in several ways. They are all signed, "B. West 1788," and drawn vertically within an oval shape on a rectangular paper, 52 1/2-by-20 centimeters with pen and brown ink and a brown wash. Two, Malachi and Zachariah, also have the word Windsor written under his signature. Each prophet is holding a tall staff with a rounded end, and a scroll, except for Daniel. All four are wearing the draped robes signifying the clothing from ancient times.

Micah, who prophesied around 750-686 B.C. in Judah, championed the cause for social righteousness and help for the poor. He also foretold the fall of the Northern Kingdom and the desolation of Judah, recorded in the book of Micah in the Bible. West has drawn him facing forward, his weight on his left leg and right knee bent, with long hair and a beard(fig. 49.).

The second drawing is of Daniel (fig. 50.), who wrote about Israel's future in God's total plan in the book of Daniel, from 605-536 B.C.. He is shown with shoulder-length hair and a beard, and two lions at rest by his feet. His arms are crossed over his staff and he is standing on his left leg with his right leg in front and his knee bent. His face is looking slightly to his right and upward.

Zachariah (fig. 51.), or Zechariah, the third prophet, and author of the book of Zechariah, lived and prophesied around 520-480 B.C. He encouraged the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, but is best known for his foretelling of the coming of the Messiah. He is depicted with his left foot on a step and right leg on the ground, and

leaning on a pillar with his left elbow. Zachariah's hair is short but his beard is long as he looks off into the distance.

The last Old Testament prophet, Malachi (fig. 52.), wrote and prophesied from 433-420 B.C., urging his people to return to God. Again West has drawn a prophet facing front with his left elbow resting on a pillar and his hand on his chin. He also has his weight on his right leg with his left knee bent. Malachi is seen with very long hair, on which a turban rests, and he has a long beard.

The mood of these drawings is very calm and as classical as their weight shifts. Their facial expressions are serious and contemplative, matching their respective roles in history. The draperies are very Renaissance in style as seen in Bartolommeo's drawings or Raphael and Michelangelo's paintings. In the preliminary study of the drawings and the chapel designs, it was believed that the word Windsor written on nine of the drawings, seven covered in this chapter, meant that West had possibly drawn them originally to be incorporated into King George III's Windsor Chapels' projects. After completing more extensive research, the author now believes that Windsor was written on the drawing to indicate his place of residence. He was provided a room in the castle to work and his commissions for the Windsor Chapels and the Greenwich Chapel did overlap.

Although Richard Lawrence, carver, had submitted on August 18 of 1786 his estimate of two hundred pounds for the "Carving to the Pulpit, as per design approved by

the Board.”,²³ the actual work was not completed until sometime between 1788, the date of West’s drawings and the fall of 1789, when the chapel was finished.

West’s pulpit and reader’s desk designs form a valuable portion of his work for the Greenwich Chapel. They continue the Biblical theme of the total scheme as the six pulpit narratives are all taken from the New Testament and the four reader’s desk figures are Old Testament prophets. The origin and meaning of these designs and of the entire decorative scheme for the chapel will be thoroughly explained in the Conclusion, Chapter IX. West’s style in these ten designs demonstrates even more fully his stylistic borrowings from the Baroque, and Rubens in particular. Incorporated into the drama of these scenes are extremely expressive facial and body gestures that show West’s interest in the sublime and his personal goal of spiritual instruction and of moral encouragement of the omnipotence of their God.

²³Lesley Lewis, “The Architects of The Chapel At Greenwich Hospital,” *Art Bulletin* 29 (1947):264.

CHAPTER VIII

THE STATUES

The entrance to the Greenwich Chapel leads into a large octagonal vestibule and placed in each of the four corners is a niche with a statue designed by West, carved out of Coade stone. The statues represent Meekness and the three theological virtues; Faith, Hope, and Charity.¹ Popular female allegorical symbols have been used as decorative art since the early Middle Ages. Their presence is a reminder to the person entering the chapel of the quality of moral excellence they should strive for in his or her own life. The figures were designed and sculpted with their traditional attributes and below each is an appropriate inscription from the Bible.

It was decided at the time of the restoration of the chapel in 1955, eighty-three years after it had become the Royal Naval College Chapel, to omit the original titles for the statues because the attribution of one of the virtues, Meekness, was not considered a suitable description of a naval officer.² The statue of Meekness was thereafter called Innocence.

¹John Cooke and John Maule, *An Historical Account of the Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich* (Greenwich, England: Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich, 1789), 4.

²Basil Watson, *A Short Guide to the Chapel of St. Peter and St. Paul* (Greenwich, England: Royal Naval College, Greenwich, 1955), 18.

Three of these statues are named after the three theological virtues listed in the Bible in I Corinthians 13:13. They were designated during the Middle Ages, along with the four cardinal virtues--justice, prudence, fortitude and temperance--and were used to teach moral lessons, often by contrasting them with a vice. The use of the female figure, with identifying attributes to personify these abstract concepts began in classical antiquity. A number of dictionaries of mythography were available to the Renaissance and Baroque artists and one of the most influential was Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*, 1593, published in Italian and widely translated. His work became the basis for much of the religious and secular allegory in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.³

In storage at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, are four drawings by West that were utilized by the Coade factory to create the statues. The first one is of Faith, drawn in pen and brown ink with a brown wash (fig. 53.). There is no date or signature and the drawing appears to be faded as it is light and hard to read. The young woman is seated with her right foot on the ground and her left foot upon a rock, which symbolizes her unshakable foundation, her faith. As she glances downward, her face is calm and composed. The long dress covers only the left shoulder and falls in large folds onto the ground while her hair is swept up and falls in curls onto her right shoulder. Faith holds a book in her right arm to symbolize the scriptures and a chalice, representing the miracle of the sacraments, in her left hand, both traditional attributes.⁴

³James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects & Symbols in Art* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 336.

⁴*Ibid.* 118.

The sculpture (fig. 54.) is identical in composition to the drawing, but there is one difference that is common to all four figures. In each finished statue the artist has provided the female with a much fuller figure than was represented in the drawing. West, in all these drawings, did not add every detail in pen and ink but shaped his figures and fabrics more with the washes perhaps because forming a statue after a drawing would not be as precise as for a painting.

Beneath the sculpture, all in capitals, as is true of all such inscriptions, is the quotation from Hebrews 11:1, "FAITH IS THE SUBSTANCE OF THINGS HOPED FOR THE EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN."

There are several drawings in different collections that demonstrate that West used this one shoulder dress and the same hair style in many of his works. In the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's collection is a drawing entitled *Faith*, signed, "B. West 1784," in pen and brown ink, that does have some similarities to the Greenwich drawing of Faith. They point out the fact that because the Greenwich sculpture is the only known work of art with this subject and it is from the same period in his career, it is possible that it is an early drawing for the sculpture.⁵ There are two more sketches in which the woman exhibits the familiar dress, head position and hair style: one is in the Swarthmore College collection of drawings which consists of a man and woman that

⁵Stanley Weintraub and Randy Ploog, *Benjamin West Drawings* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Museum of Art, 1987), 36.

appears to be a preliminary drawing for *Paetus and Arria*, 1770; and another drawing entitled *The Toilet of Venus* from the Pierpont Morgan Library.

West's use of these classical dress elements was a practice undoubtedly taught to him by Anton R. Mengs, his teacher in Rome in the early 1760s. One of Mengs's paintings, *Octavius & Cleopatra*, 1760, is a good example of the mode, style and techniques that West was absorbing from his mentor and teacher, who was a follower of Wincklemann. Some of West's early paintings, *Angelica and Medoro*; 1763-64, and *Venus Lamenting the Death of Adonis*, 1768, depict the identical style of hair and dress as Mengs employed, and it is repeated again in the Faith drawings. West used this stylistic quotation continually throughout his life, as perceived in *Cupid Stung by a Bee*, 1796-1802, from his late years.

The next sculpture is *Hope*. West's drawing is signed, "B. West," and is in pen and brown ink, brown wash, light blue wash and white highlights (fig. 55.). Hope is depicted as a young woman with long flowing hair in a long sleeved dress. A large anchor resting upon a tall stone is juxtaposed to her right leg and her right foot, that rests on a low stone. Part of the fabric of her robe is draped around her and over the anchor, as is customary for her attribute. This symbol is derived from St. Paul who said of hope in Hebrews 6:19; "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul." She also is gazing toward heaven, the source of all hope.⁶

⁶Hall, 156.

The Coade stone statue (fig. 56.) is identical in composition to the drawing. However, her robes cling to her figure in a wet drapery appearance, a characteristic unlike West's drawing. Hope's dress in the sculpture is the same style as that worn by Faith and Charity, whereas in West's drawing her gown is long sleeved on both sides. The hair is very different. West had drawn this woman's hair very loose and flowing, in a style similar to that of a woman in another of West's drawings entitled *Hope* in the Historical Society's collection. These two are very similar in appearance, except they are reversed. It could possibly be an early preparatory drawing.⁷

The inscription below the statue reads, "WHICH HOPE WE HAVE AS AN ANCHOR OF THE SOUL BOTH SURE AND STEADFAST."

The third virtue is Charity and West's drawing is in pen and brown ink, and a brown wash, again faded or very lightly drawn (fig. 57.). Historically, Charity stands for a person who nurses and protects children and gives alms to the poor. Her original attribute revolved around a beggar who was putting on a shirt while she held a bundle of clothes. Often she held a flame, possibly in a vase, to represent the love of God. It was in Italy during the fourteenth century that she was represented as a mother suckling two infants and by the sixteenth century it was the standard symbol. In later versions, she was often seen with several children around her, one usually at her breast, similar to the Greenwich statue.⁸

⁷Weintraub & Ploog, 37.

⁸Hall, 64.

West's drawing depicts the woman in a sitting position as she holds her left breast for her infant while two small children gather around her. Her gaze is calm as she looks down on them. Charity's appearance is again similar to Faith's in her dress and hair style. The Coade statue (fig. 58.) and the drawing are identical in most respects, with the exception of her drapery, which clings to her and reveals more of her shape.

The inscription below the sculpture is located in Mark 9:41. "WHOEVER SHALL GIVE TO DRINK UNTO ONE OF THESE LITTLE ONES A CUP OF COLD WATER ONLY IN THE NAME OF A DISCIPLE VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, HE SHALL IN NO WISE LOSE HIS REWARD."

The fourth drawing is for a sculpture of Meekness. This personification was not a usual one and was not one of the traditional virtues. However, it is a term often used in the King James Version of the Bible, the translation used in the eighteenth century. It is derived from the Greek word *praotes*, "gentleness" and was translated "meekness" in the King James Version. Jesus used the term in describing himself in Matthew 11:29 when he said he was meek and lowly in heart. However, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, the term meekness did not seem suitable for naval officers and so this caption and the other three original attributions were omitted in 1955 during a restoration process. The woman was called Innocence thereafter.

West's drawing (fig. 59.) depicts the young woman leaning on a ledge of stone with her weight on her left leg and right knee bent. Resting on the stone and within the woman's right arm is a lamb, a symbol of purity and also of Christ. In her left arm she

holds a bunch of long leaves or palm fronds along with some flowers. According to Ripa's *Iconology*, the palm frond stood for purity after baptism. Ripa wrote about Innocence, as a minor virtue, and used the lamb, palm frond and flowers as her attributes, consequently the change in name suited the statue's appearance.

There is only one minor difference between the drawing and the final statue (fig. 60.). West had drawn the lamb as though it were looking straight out at the viewer, whereas in the final version, the lamb is looking up at the young woman. Beneath the sculpture is the inscription from Matthew 5:5. "BLESSED ARE THE MEEK FOR THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH."

All four of the drawings and the sculptures after them were completed in an eighteenth-century classical style, similar to works that some of West's contemporaries were doing, such as Thomas Banks or John Flaxman. The classical revival in England was no surprise by the late eighteenth century, as the English had been very interested in classical antiquity since the first of the century. The transfer of the enthusiasm into sculpture resulted not only in allegorical personifications of antique virtues but often in monuments to military heroes and to cultural heroes in a timeless mode, a direction in which Joshua Reynolds was interested.

Under "Statues and Figures" in a published list of sculpture completed by the Coade factory between 1771 and 1819, are the four virtues installed in the Greenwich

vestibule. Also included are many other statues of either the three theological virtues or the four cardinal virtues.⁹

There is not a definite record as to who actually sculpted the statues. As was customary by their company, Coade Lambeth carved the name Coade into the base of the statue of Meekness. Margaret Whinney states that John Bacon, R.A., was the chief designer at the E. Coade Artificial Stone Manufactory in Lambeth, for thirty years beginning in 1769 and that "Bacon's hand can clearly be detected in figures as Faith, Hope, Charity and Meekness in the ante-chapel at Greenwich Hospital."¹⁰ She speaks of his work as being Neoclassical, but not in the true Classical style found in the art of Banks or Flaxman. Whereas they adhered more to the essence of the classical past which they had studied diligently, Bacon combined sentiment with classicism in a fashion popular with patrons at the time. Whinney said, "His most favored motive was the elegant female figure with flowing draperies."¹¹

The original 1789 guidebook lists John Bacon, R.A., as having sculpted the portal frieze and the two angels on the upper right and left of the altarpiece, but no information about which artist did the four statues.¹² In the 1955 guidebook Watson mentions that the statues were designed by West of Coade stone and cost sixty guineas each.¹³ His only reference to Bacon was a comment that in his association with E. Coade, he was

⁹Rupert Gunnis, *Dictionary of British Sculptors 1660-1851* (London), 106.

¹⁰Margaret Whinney, *Sculpture in Britain 1530-1830* (London: Penguin Books, 1964), 304.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 308.

¹²Cooke and Maule, 100.

¹³Watson, 18.

responsible for much of their marble statuary and may have perfected the composition and use of the artificial material.¹⁴ The 1989 revised chapel guide repeats the information from the 1789 book.¹⁵ Consequently there is no official record as to whether Bacon actually did the work, but it is evident that he was involved to some extent because of his position in the E. Coade factory.

The four sculptures of Faith, Hope, Charity, and Meekness located in the vestibule provide an appropriate spiritual atmosphere through which the worshiper passes before entering the chapel. The subjects of these statues are scriptural but the content is not a part of the specific theme upon which the interior is based. This religious theme, which will be discussed in the Conclusion, Chapter IX, is a reflection of the theology of the dominant Anglican bishops at this time. These sculptures enable us to visualize and understand some of the aesthetic and stylistic characteristics of the work that West and his contemporaries were producing in the eighteenth century, namely a revival of a Classical element to help link what they believed to be virtues from ancient Greece and Rome to their present society, for moral guidance.

¹⁴Ibid., 24.

¹⁵Stuart Thompson, *The Chapel, Royal Naval College, Greenwich* (Watford, Great Britain: Woodmansterne Publications, Ltd., 1989), 3.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

The theme of West's work in the Royal Naval College Chapel, Greenwich, without question plays an important role in his *oeuvre*. During his lifetime West had clearly stated numerous times the goals he wished to accomplish and even more importantly, what the objective of art for all artists should be. These goals were a result of his family's strong religious background; his early training in the United States primarily by William Henry--who being aware of the current aesthetic thinking in Europe downplayed portraits and encouraged West to paint morally uplifting historical subjects, the highest goal of all; his Italian sojourn where he studied ancient Greek and Roman art and where he came under the influence of Mengs and Wincklemann, who were pioneers in reviving that ancient classical art; and finally his timing in arriving in England during the 1760s, when England was just beginning to form art organizations that held annual public exhibitions and that sought to promote the same type of elevated historical art taught to West by William Henry.

The chapel is within a complex of buildings built on a historically significant site in Greenwich, England, whose court connections began with Henry V in the early 1400s and continued through Henry VIII, Charles II, to King William and Queen Mary, who designated the land for the Royal Hospital for Seamen in 1694.

One of the most important aspects of West's career became his friendship with King George III, a man whose spirit matched West's so closely that their combined aesthetic goals resulted in nearly a lifetime of commissions for West. The friendship and mutual respect between these two men eventually brought about the most important commission in West's life in 1782, the decoration of a chapel in Windsor Castle. The theme for this decorative scheme evolved from three sources: West, George III and his Anglican advisors. The commission in 1782 for the Greenwich Chapel was given to West during the time of the Windsor project and it became thematically, in essence, a smaller version of Windsor. West's work in Greenwich also becomes a window through which one can see the past and present influences, on himself and his contemporaries, which guided their great variety of artistic output.

The strong belief of West, that art should morally enhance the viewer's life, motivated him to pursue commissions in local churches. Religious art in public churches had been on the whole rejected by the official Anglican circles since the time of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, when Parliament condemned it. Eighteenth-century artists again sought this type of patronage, that had supported the French and Italian schools, but they were not overly successful in securing such commissions. Because of this situation, portraiture had become the main product in maintaining economic success. The organizing members of the Royal Academy had hoped to persuade church officials gradually to allow decorative art in their buildings.¹ As discussed in Chapter III, a group

¹Jerry D. Meyer, "Benjamin West's 'St. Stephen Altar-piece': a Study in late eighteenth-century Protestant Church Patronage and English History Painting," *Burlington Magazine*, September 1976, 634.

of six Royal Academy artists, including West, proposed in 1773 to donate one painting each to fill the large vacant panels and compartments in St. Paul's Cathedral, London, which Christopher Wren had designed. Thomas Newton, the Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral and King George III both were very agreeable to the decorative plan, but the Bishop of London, Richard Terrick, soundly vetoed the idea.² Two of the king's additional titles were Defender of the Faith and head of the Church of England. He took this position very seriously, and although extremely interested in all art and consequently in promoting church decoration, he was also very sensitive to the views of his Anglican bishops.³

After the demise of the St. Paul's project, West exhibited the sketch for his proposed cathedral painting, *Moses Receiving the Tables*, in the Royal Academy show in 1774. Also included in this show was his first religious subject painting, an altarpiece for the Rochester Cathedral, *The Angels Appearing to the Shepherds*, 1774. The painting was commissioned by Joseph Wilcocks, the son of a former Bishop of Rochester and also a friend and scholar of West, whom he had met in Rome.⁴ West had proposed the subject and Wilcocks, after studying it, gave his suggestions for changes.⁵ In the same show, West exhibited a sketch for an altarpiece for St. Stephen Walbrook, London, entitled *Devout Men Taking the Body of St. Stephen*, 1776. As a result of this exhibit West began

²Helmut von Erffa and Allen Staley, *The Paintings of Benjamin West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 87.

³Helmut von Erffa, "Benjamin West at the Height of His Career," *American Art Journal* 1 (1969): 20.

⁴von Erffa and Staley, *The Paintings of West*, 87.

⁵*Ibid.*, 328.

to realize his goals of completing art for the churches and the elevating of the minds of the worshippers. He received two more altarpiece commissions; one from Trinity College, Cambridge, for which he painted *St. Michael*, 1777, and the other from Winchester Cathedral, for which he painted *The Raising of Lazarus*, 1780.⁶ Following the Academy exhibition of 1779, which included West's *St. Peter Denying Christ*, he gave the painting to George III as a gift. This became the first religious subject painted for the court and today is the only Biblical narrative still in the Royal Collection.⁷

Around this time period in 1779, King George and West would discuss what type of subjects lent themselves best to the art of painting. West's own belief in the power of scriptural subjects is quoted in Alberts.

The scriptural being wholly grounded upon truth, the painter had only to consult nature in her purest and simplest character, and make his representation perfect; whereas the nature of the poets was, in essence, a fiction, and the painter, to do justice to his author, must see through the poet as a medium.⁸

West drew up some sketches for a decorative scheme of the great events in the history of religion for the Royal Chapel inside Windsor Castle. Upon returning to the king's residence to discuss his ideas, West was surprised by the presence of six Anglican bishops who had been summoned by the king to confer on the acceptability of the proposed ecclesiastical art and to hear West's explanation of his views and the theme for the chapel. He had divided the subjects into four Dispensations: Antediluvian and

⁶Ibid., 394.

⁷Jerry D. Meyer, "Benjamin West's Chapel of Revealed Religion: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Protestant Religious Art," *The Art Bulletin*, June 1975, 247.

⁸Robert C. Alberts, *Benjamin West* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978), 158.

Patriarchal, Mosaical--including the Prophets, Gospel, and Revelation. The paintings were divided fairly evenly between the Old and the New Testaments. A list of each subject was handed out to the bishops with a request that they meet again to give their verdict. At the later meeting, within the same year 1779, their unanimous decision in favor of the chapel was received and West was now the recipient of the most ambitious church commission ever to be given in England.⁹

Although the four Dispensation divisions of the chapel theme appear to have been conceived by West, the genesis of his ideas undoubtedly was an outgrowth of the theology of several prominent Anglican bishops with whom West associated during his early years in London. One bishop respected by the king was Thomas Newton, whom West had met in 1765 and also for whom he had finished several paintings. Newton had written *Dissertations on the Prophecies, which have Remarkably been Fulfilled and at this Time are Fulfilling in the World*. His work evolved from the tradition of Bishop William Warburton, who wrote *The Divine Legation of Moses Demonstrated on the Principles of a Religious Deist*. In 1768, he also organized the Warburton Lecture at Lincoln's Inn, "to prove the truth of revealed religion in general, and of the Christian in particular, from the completion of the prophecies in the Old and New Testament, which relate to the Christian Church, especially to the apostacy of Papal Rome."¹⁰ Before his death in 1779, the time of the genesis of the Windsor project, Warburton had held, as one

⁹Ibid., 159.

¹⁰William Warburton, *Works*, vol. 1 (London, 1811), 90, quoted in John Dillenberger, *Benjamin West* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1977), 59.

of his many responsibilities, the position of chaplain to George II. His philosophy was passed on to one of his pupils and close friends, Bishop Richard Hurd, who was also a favorite of George III and became preceptor to the king's eldest sons. Warburton's teaching traced divine revelation to man in "natural" and "revealed" religion, from Adam to Christ. The Jewish Dispensation in the Old Testament was essential to the advent of Christ in the New Testament. Moses and his laws confirmed a monotheistic religion and moralistic law which connected the secular state with religion. The prophets, in post-Mosaic history, reminded the people of their sins and prophesied hope of a new dispensation under Christ, the final chapter of revealed religion. Warburton particularly emphasized two of the prophets, Jeremiah and Isaiah, who prepared the way for Christ.¹¹ These three men, in different ways, supported orthodox Anglican theology in opposition to the Deists, another religious group whose theories accepted God's existence on the grounds of reason, but refused to accept the traditional biblical belief that the truth of God's existence is based on His revelations to man throughout history.¹²

Jerry Meyer, in his extensive study of West's religious paintings as an example of late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century moral sentiment, discusses the fact that West's Chapel of Revealed Religion reflects Warburton's theories of a logical order to biblical history, a God-directed chain of cause and effect. It was a theory that could be accepted by the eighteenth-century theologians and historians to explain historical

¹¹Jerry D. Meyer, "The Religious Paintings of Benjamin West: A Study in Late Eighteenth-Century and Early Nineteenth-Century Moral Sentiment" (Ph. D. diss., New York University, 1973), 132-133.

¹²von Erffa and Staley, *The Paintings of West*, 581.

progression and moral enlightenment in the intellectual and spiritual sphere.¹³

Intellectuals of many professions had been debating, as part of the “Enlightenment,” what was the source of truth: reason, emotion, revelation, moralism or romanticism, science or faith, republican values or absolutist claims. The bishops’ idea was that established authority revealed through historical Christianity also validated the authority of the church and the state.¹⁴ King George III agreed with this conservative and traditional philosophy and he continued to be dismayed by the Enlightenment’s popularity, even before the French Revolution. “I wish,” he stated in 1777, “Samuel Johnson would mount his drayhorse and ride over these fellows.”¹⁵

The commission in 1782 for the Greenwich altar painting was the largest and most complicated single work West had attempted up to this time for a church. The theme of the decorative art within the main chapel, excluding the vestibule statues, is a closely linked version of his plan for the chapel at Windsor. Looking at Dillenberger’s detailed chart of all the different lists of West’s planned works for two chapels at Windsor, the Royal Chapel and St. George’s Chapel, one can see that West’s ideas changed and evolved through the years he worked at Windsor. In an original list from the 1780s, recorded by Galt, West’s Dispensations did not include the Antediluvian or Patriarchal era, but consisted of Mosaical and the prophets, Gospel, and Revelation. It

¹³Meyer, “The Religious Paintings of West” (Ph. D. diss., 1973), 134.

¹⁴Dillenberger, 60.

¹⁵E. Holt, *Life of George III* (London, 1820), 218, quoted in von Erffa, “West at Height of Career,” 20.

was not until after the Greenwich scheme was completed that he brought in this earlier Biblical Dispensation.¹⁶

The scheme at Greenwich includes many of the same subjects that were planned for Windsor, but emphasizes the New Testament personalities to a greater degree, as the chapel was centered around Paul. No record exists to determine the genesis of the Greenwich Chapel theme. However, in reviewing the pattern of West's church commissions, such as the paintings in the 1772 Rochester Cathedral, the 1774 St. Stephen Walbrook work and the Windsor chapels, one realizes that West developed the original ideas and then made adjustments according to the patron's suggestions.

In studying the dispensation of Moses and the prophets in West's original plan for the Windsor Royal Chapel, there is an altar wall that depicts a large painting of Moses holding up the laws. There is some similarity between the sketch of Moses in the latter's leg and body position and in his placement on a rocky area in the upper one-half of the work, to the figure of Paul in the Greenwich altarpiece. One scene evidently added into the Windsor scheme by West, one year after the Greenwich Chapel was finished, was *Moses Showing the Brazen Serpent to the Israelites*, 1790. Moses stands on a rock with his followers gathered around, which could have evolved from West's painting of Paul's shipwreck.¹⁷ West, like most artists, borrowed ideas not only from others but also from himself throughout his life as he depicted figures in different works.

¹⁶John Dillenberger, *Benjamin West* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1977), 133-134.

¹⁷von Erffa and Staley, *The Paintings of West*, 306.

Of the three paintings of prophets planned for Windsor, West completed two: *The Call of the Prophet Isaiah*, 1784, and *The Call of the Prophet Jeremiah*, 1784. There was also one more space designated for a prophet, in one of his drawings, for a scene of “David Anointed King” which he evidently never painted.¹⁸ These three, plus the scenes of Moses, correspond to the same four prophets West painted on the second story, over the gallery door roundels in the Greenwich Chapel. In addition to these four major prophets, West included, on the reader’s desk, four of the Old Testament minor prophets, Micah, Daniel, Zachariah, and Malachi, to whom God revealed himself and commanded that they warn the Israelites to repent, return to the Law, and prepare for the coming of the Messiah.

The next Dispensation in the Windsor scheme was of the Gospel, and in most of the lists, consisted of seven events. In the Greenwich chapel the life of Christ was painted on sixteen oval medallions, by four artists other than West, located over the first floor gallery windows. The first two of the Windsor narratives, *The Nativity* and *The Angels Announcement to the Shepherds*, correspond to the first two in Greenwich. The third Windsor scene, “The Naming of John the Baptist,” was noted in West’s drawing as finished, although no record of the painting has been found, the subject can be matched to the single painting in grisaille of John among the rest of the evangelists at Greenwich. Christ’s figure in *The Ascension*, 1781-82, planned for the center of one of the Windsor walls, corresponds very closely to the *Ascension* over the altarpiece in Greenwich.

¹⁸Ibid., 318 & 309.

The last three Windsor subjects under the Gospel Dispensation are not matched in Greenwich by the exact event, but utilize the same apostles and evangelists performing tasks with the identical theological meanings. For Windsor, West completed *Peter's First Sermon*, 1785, in which God revealed Himself to the men gathered together for the festival of Pentecost and empowered the disciples to go out and preach to the world.¹⁹ This same theme of life-changing power can be seen in the Greenwich pulpit sculpture of *Paul's Conversion*. Correspondingly all the fourteen evangelists in Greenwich fall under this subject of missionary zeal.

The next Windsor Gospel subject painting was *Paul and Barnabas Rejecting the Jews and Receiving the Gentiles*, 1793, taken from Acts 13: 45-46.²⁰ This biblical injunction juxtaposes with four of the Greenwich pulpit scenes; *Vision of Cornelius*, *Elymas Struck Blind*, *St. Paul Preaching at Athens*, and *St. Paul Before Felix*. All of these events incorporate the theme of the revelation of God to Paul or Peter to preach, not only just to their own Jewish people but also to the gentiles, those who were not of the Jewish faith.

The last Gospel subject designated for Windsor was listed as "The Apostles preaching and working miracles," to be placed between the last two scenes discussed, but evidently never completed. This scene was by definition a fairly general topic, however, it can be correlated in theme to all the Greenwich evangelist figures, who preached and

¹⁹Ibid., 378.

²⁰Ibid., 383.

performed miracles and also to the pulpit sculpture of *Elymas Struck Blind*, which was deemed to be a miraculous event.

The altar painting of Paul, who was the most important figure in the Anglican hierarchy of saints, was not only a message of God's intervening in man's life and sustaining him but also of the perseverance of the evangelists to deliver their message in all situations to all people.

Allen Staley has discussed a design for a ceiling that was possibly intended for one of the Windsor chapels but it was never painted. The center scene is of the judgment and in each one of the four corners is one of the four evangelists: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.²¹ These four sketches of the evangelists, as mentioned in Chapter VI, have some similarities to the same four evangelists in Greenwich. In West's first drawings for both side walls of the Royal Chapel, he placed above the capital at the top of the pilasters, which separated the paintings, eight figures, four on each side, which appear to be from the Old Testament and are probably prophets and kings. It is not recorded as to who these men were, but scholars have assumed that they were Old Testament personalities.²² One of the figures in the sketch is wearing a crown and playing a harp, who could be King David. These eight are similar figures to the Greenwich prophets and king in the four Gallery roundels and the reader's desk prophets.²³

²¹Ibid., 579.

²²Meyer, "Benjamin West's Chapel of Revealed Religion," 249.

²³von Erffa and Staley, *The Paintings of West*, 577 & 578.

The last Dispensation of Revelation is not represented in the Greenwich Chapel and the four vestibule statues representing Christian virtues located at Greenwich, were not in the Windsor scheme. Otherwise in analyzing the comparison of the two schemes, it is evident and not unusual that as West was working on both chapels at the same time, that the Anglican revelation theology of Windsor was utilized in an altered and somewhat abbreviated form in the Greenwich chapel.

In completing the altarpiece and drawings for this theme in the Greenwich Chapel, West was very flexible in his use of artistic styles. He mixed Classical and Baroque characteristics with the more emotionally sublime aspects within the Romantic tradition of the last half of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century. His altarpiece and other designs incorporate all these styles, even though the chapel's interior architecture is strictly Neoclassical, as designed by James Stuart and William Newton. *St. Paul Shaking the Viper from His Hand after the Shipwreck* combines all of these elements effectively within this very large and complicated composition with borrowings from the past such as the *Laocoon*, Bartolommeo, Michelangelo and Raphael, Caravaggio and Rubens. His drawings for the grisaille figures in the four second floor roundels of the three major prophets and one king, and the *Ascension*, reveal the effect of West's examination of draperies by great Renaissance artists, like Bartolommeo's. The Apostles and Evangelists drawings use these identical drapery influences but at the same time, West expands the expressive qualities of many of their faces and hair, to introduce the awe and excitement of the sublime movement based on Edmund Burke's philosophies.

Borrowings from the Baroque period, along with sublime elements are evident in the pulpit drawings of scenes from the book of Acts. In the reader's desk drawings of Old Testament prophets, West has again taken us back to the Renaissance, but has added strong expressive qualities in the faces. The four statues are reflections of the romanticized classicism enjoyed by both artist and patron at this time. Therefore, the whole scheme is a good example not only of eighteenth-century art and design, but also of West's distinctive differences in style, dependent on his subject matter.

One of the common threads in the artistic community in England at this time was the emphasis on the human figure, either in historical and religious paintings or as an abstraction with simplified contours. Most of West's contemporaries, such as Barry, Romney, Flaxman, Kauffmann, and Fuseli, had studied the antique forms in Italy or casts made from antiques that were available in England, as well as engravings by the Old Masters, and were well indoctrinated into the well known and popular view that ancient classical art was characterized by Winckelmann's noble simplicity and calm grandeur.

The importance West placed on a figure's moral and physical expression is evident in their facial expressions, head positions and hair. Some are classically calm, others show great expressions of awe, terror or surprise, a wonderfully romantic manifestation of the sublime. In a discourse delivered to students at the Royal Academy as President of that institution on 10 December 1794, West stated that the student of the fine arts must have,

his studies directed by a philosophical spirit, and the observation of physical expression rendered conducive to some moral purpose. Without the guidance

of such a spirit, painting and sculpture are but ornamental manufactures; and the works of Raphael and Michael Angelo [sic], considered without reference to the manifestations which they exhibit of moral influence, possess no merit beyond the productions of the ordinary paper-hanger [sic].²⁴

He continued to say that the male figure should express vigorous strength like the *Apollo Belvedere*, but the female should demonstrate “a virtuous mind, modest mien, tranquil deportment, and a gracefulness in motion.” The artist should also give her “a smooth and round fullness of form, to indicate the softness of character; bend the head gently forward in the common attitude of modesty;” as seen in the *Medici Venus*.²⁵ West’s drawings for the statues of the female personifications of the virtues, exemplify graphically his views expressed to the academy members.

At this same time, artists also drew upon past artists like Michelangelo for inspiration for twisting, turning and sometimes tormented bodies in art that incorporated Burke’s sublime ideas of terror and awe, to help the viewer to heighten his experience. West appeared to enjoy scenes charged with strong emotion and used ideas developed by Henry Fuseli, in his wild gestures, and foreshortened figures who looked down on the viewer with a fierce expression.²⁶ However, Fuseli did not envision West so kindly in return, as a result of professional jealousy caused by the fact that West was so successful. Because of his close friendship to the king, West had obtained most of the court’s commissions, many of the church commissions, and the presidency of the Royal

²⁴John Galt, *The Life, Studies and Works of Benjamin West, Esq.* 2 vols. (London: Cadell and Davies, 1816-1820), 96.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 101.

²⁶Alberts, 223.

Academy. Consequently some of his contemporaries felt there was nothing left for them.²⁷

West was like a dry sponge, absorbing the past ideals and the present artistic innovations and because of his fierce belief in himself, probably a result of his early home life, his distinctive personality, and arriving in the London at the time he did, he was never hesitant to attempt new ideas. He was not totally ingrained in the European tradition of what was acceptable or expected. His talent lay in the ability to drop one style to try another, or to work in several at one time, only to come back again to the first.

West was not just a participant, but a pioneer, in these trends of subject matter and style.

In a 1938 exhibition catalogue, the director of the Pennsylvania Museum of Art Fiske Kimball wrote:

If the British school and West . . . were important in the formation of French classicism, we . . . find that he was equally in advance in the general development of Romanticism of figure painting. Here the great French manifestos were the works of Gericault and Delacroix at the Salon of 1827. Although we now recognize that French Romanticism had a long period of formation prior to this, prior even to 1800, it must be appreciated that in such a tendency the British were far in advance, with West in the van.²⁸

In Delacroix's journal, he wrote a reminder to himself to study the sketches of West and also to borrow the engravings of Trumbull and West.²⁹

²⁷William Dunlap, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Design in the United States* 3 vols. (New York, 1834, New York: Dover Publications, 1969), 1:86.

²⁸Fiske Kimball and Henri Marceau, *Benjamin West 1738-1802* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Museum of Art, 1938), quoted in Alberts, 223.

²⁹Alberts, 223.

Alan Cunningham, who wrote in 1831, five volumes on the lives of prominent artists, sculptors, and architects, expressed a view of West that persists even today. He commented that West worked long and hard painting hundreds of pictures, mostly historical or religious subjects, that were considered by the artist himself to be in the true spirit of the great masters. His intent was to illustrate Scripture and render Gospel truth more impressive, and the scope of his works “makes us shudder at human presumption.” His human forms are skillful and academic but often lack vitality and sometimes are monotonous, cold and formal. Yet many works are also “distinguished by great excellence.”³⁰

The Windsor chapel with its revealed religion theme was one of the most ambitious decorative schemes envisioned in England in the eighteenth century. After 1801, when he was ordered by the king’s architect, James Wyatt, to stop work on the paintings for the Royal Chapel without having completed the project, until his death in 1820, West’s art consisted mainly of religious paintings.³¹ To decorate a chapel entirely with his own work was closely related to his strong dedication to his own moral and aesthetic beliefs. Although West did not realize it at the time, the Greenwich Royal Naval College Chapel has become the fulfillment of his highest goal and is an extensive monument to his life and works. Even in his later years, when he faced more criticism and had lost the support of the court, his confidence never seemed to diminish. In the late

³⁰Allan Cunningham, *The Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters and Sculptors and Architects* 5 vols. (London: John Murrar, 1830-1839), 2:56-57.

³¹von Erffa and Staley, *The Paintings of West*, 577.

1790s, as he was giving a friend a tour of the Greenwich chapel one day, they both stood before his *St. Paul Shaking the Viper from His Hand after the Shipwreck*, and West was heard to remark, "A little burst of genius, sir!"³²

³²Alberts, 209.

APPENDIX

CHRONOLOGY OF BENJAMIN WEST, 1738-1820

- 1738 Born 10 October, Springfield, Pennsylvania to John and Sarah Pearson West.
- 1747 Met English artist William Williams in Philadelphia, who lent him books on artist's lives.
- Early Lived with sister and husband in Philadelphia. Received instruction from
1750s William Williams and Moravian artist John Valentine Hide.
- 1755- In Lancaster, Pennsylvania, painted first historical subject, *The Death of*
1756 *Socrates*.
- 1756 Moved to Philadelphia and became protege of college provost, the Rev. William Smith.
- 1757- Painted portraits in Philadelphia to earn funds to travel and study abroad.
1758
- 1758 Moved to New York to paint portraits.
- 1760 Sailed to Leghorn, Italy and became the first American artist to travel to Italy.
- 1760- Traveled in Italy and studied under Anton Raphael Mengs while in Rome.
1763
- 1763 Arrived in England.
- 1764 Exhibited three paintings with great success at the Society of Artists's show. Decided to remain in England and married Elizabeth Shewell of Philadelphia.
- 1766 Birth of son, Raphael Lamar West.
- 1768 Helped to organize the Royal Academy of Arts and became a charter member. Painted *Agrippina Landing at Brundisium with the Ashes of Germanicus* which led King George III to offer royal patronage.
- 1770 Painted *The Death of General Wolfe* which established his reputation.
- 1772 Birth of Benjamin West, Jr.
Appointed Historical Painter to the king and also received first church commission for an altarpiece.

- 1778 Received commission to paint a series of Biblical paintings for the Windsor Castle Royal Chapel and three other court projects.
- 1782 Commissioned to paint altarpiece and complete designs for thirty-three related artworks to be installed in the Greenwich Hospital Chapel.
- 1789 The finished Greenwich Chapel altarpiece installed along with remaining paintings and sculptures after West's designs.
- 1792 Became second president of the Royal Academy of Arts.
- 1801 Royal patronage ceased with the serious illness of King George III.
- 1820 Died 11 March, London and buried in St. Paul's Cathedral.

CHRONOLOGY OF GREENWICH ROYAL NAVAL COLLEGE CHAPEL

- 1694 Royal Hospital for old and disabled seamen founded by Queen Mary and King William.
- 1695 Christopher Wren prepared first designs for Greenwich Hospital but they were not accepted.
- 1699 Wren presented revised plan for two blocks of buildings known as King William's Court and Queen Mary's Court. Construction began on foundations for Queen Mary block which included the chapel.
- 1752 Original chapel designed by Christopher Wren but completed by Thomas Ripley after Wren's death.
- 1779 Chapel interior destroyed by fire. James Stuart began to rebuild chapel with the help of Robert Mylne, Clerk of Works.
- 1782 Mylne dismissed and William Newton appointed as new assistant to Stuart. Benjamin West received commission for altarpiece and designs for thirty-three related works of art within the chapel.
- 1789 Chapel rebuilding completed by William Newton one year after Stuart's death. West's altarpiece *St. Paul Shaking the Viper from His Hand after the Shipwreck* installed.
- 1869 Greenwich Pensioners Hospital closed.
- 1873 Royal Naval College established.
- 1955 The Royal Naval College Chapel, Greenwich, officially dedicated under the name of St. Peter and St. Paul, after extensive restoration work was completed.

ILLUSTRATIONS



Fig. 1. Interior of the Royal Naval College Chapel, Greenwich, England.

PARCHEMENT D'INDIE
SOUTHWORTH CO. U.S.A.
100% COTTON FIBER



Fig. 2. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. Paul Shaking the Viper from His Hand after the Shipwreck, pen and ink, brown wash. Photo by author.

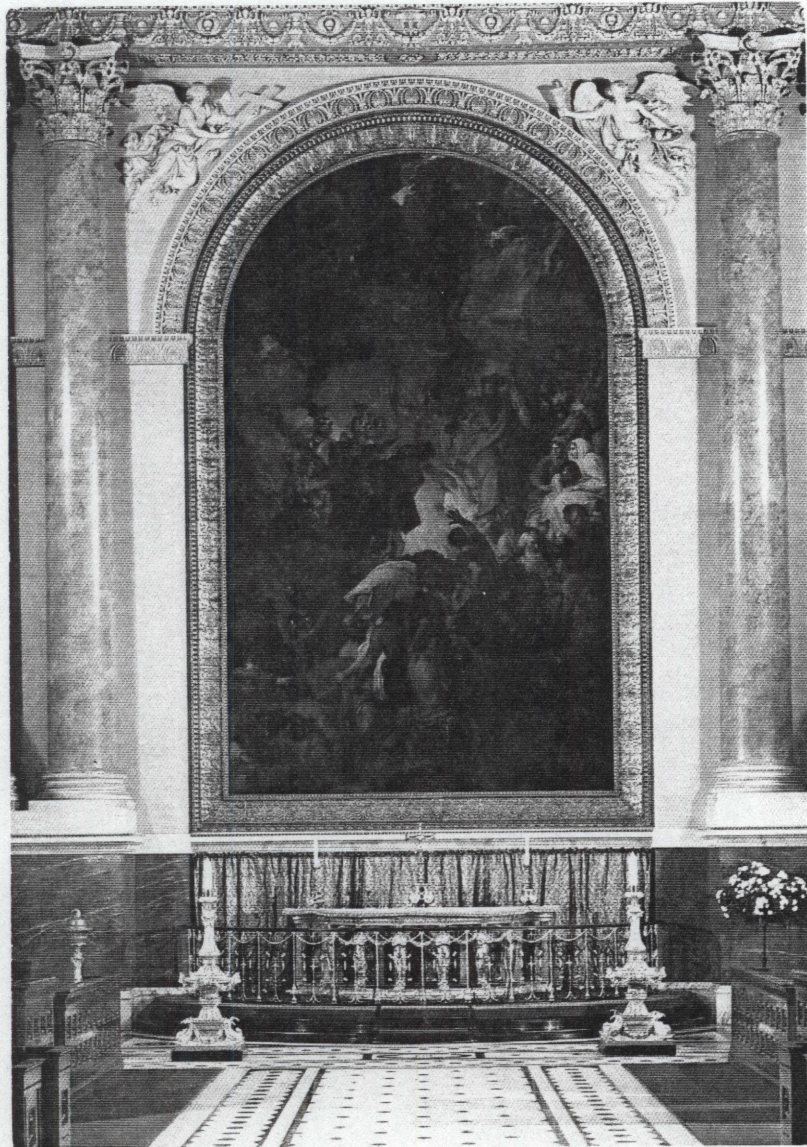


Fig. 3. Benjamin West, *St. Paul Shaking the Viper from His Hand after the Shipwreck*, 1789, oil on canvas.



Fig. 4. Francesco Bartolozzi, *St. Paul Shaking the Viper from His Hand after the Shipwreck*, 1791, engraving. Photo by author.



Fig. 5. Biagio Rebecca, *Ascension*, oil on canvas. Photo by author.



Fig. 6. Benjamin West, Drawing of God the Father, pen and brown ink, brown wash, graphite. Photo by author.

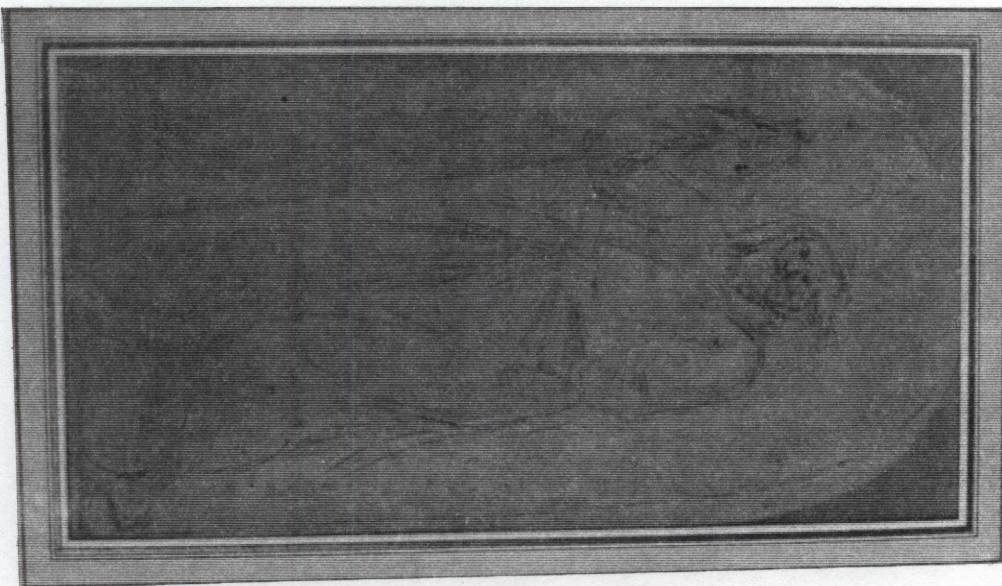


Fig. 7.

Fig. 7. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. Matthias, 1788, pen and brown ink, brown wash. Photo by author.



Fig. 8.

Fig. 8. Biagio Rebecca, *St. Matthias*, oil on canvas. Photo by author.

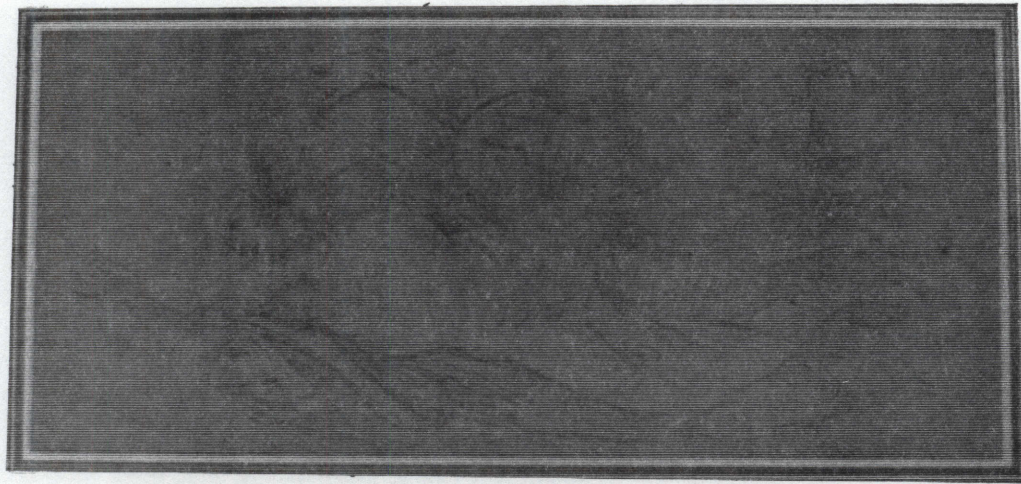


Fig. 9.

Fig. 9. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. John, 1788, pen and brown ink, brown wash. Photo by author.



Fig. 10.

Fig. 10. Biagio Rebecca, *St. John*, oil on canvas. Photo by author.

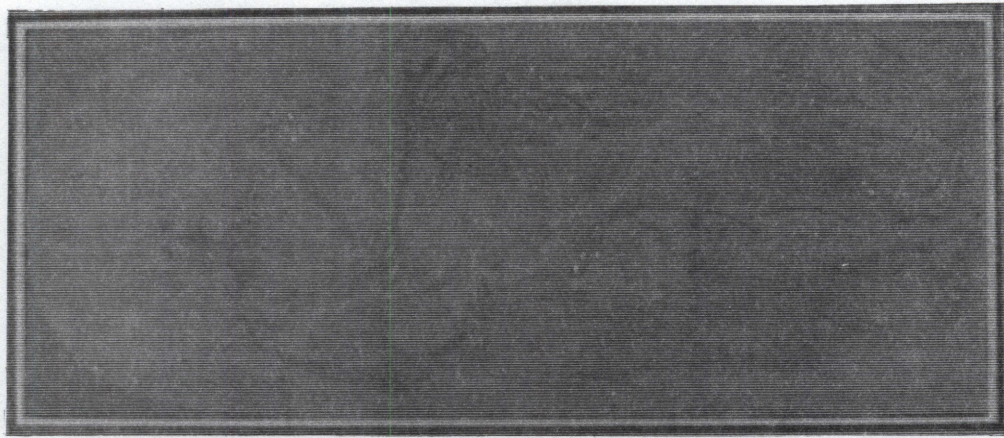


Fig. 11.

Fig. 11. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. Thomas, 1788, pen and brown ink, brown wash. Photo by author.



Fig. 12.

Fig. 12. Biagio Rebecca, *St. Thomas*, oil on canvas. Photo by author.

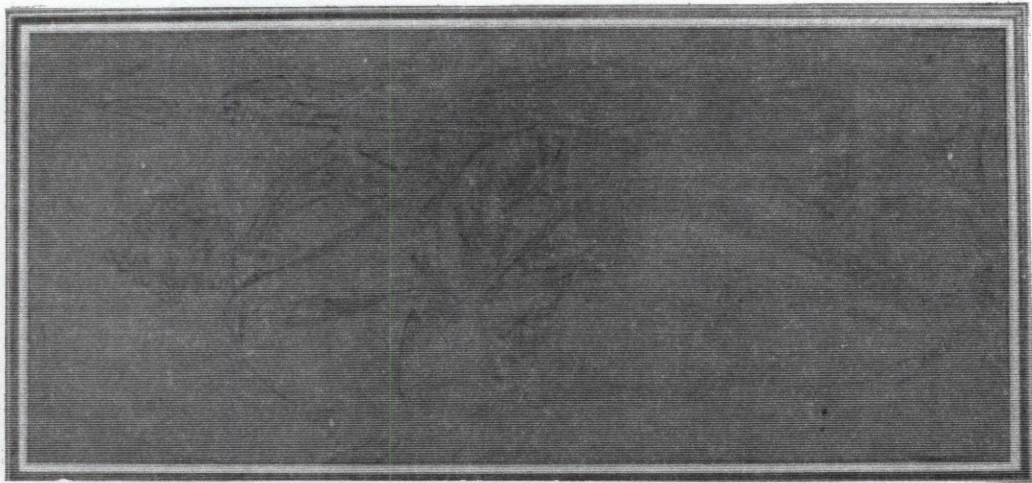


Fig. 13.

Fig. 13. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. Jude, 1788, pen and brown ink, brown wash. Photo by author.



Fig. 14.

Fig. 14. Biagio Rebecca, *St. Jude*, oil on canvas. Photo by author.



Fig. 16.

Fig. 15. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. Simon, 1788, pen and brown ink, brown wash. Photo by author.

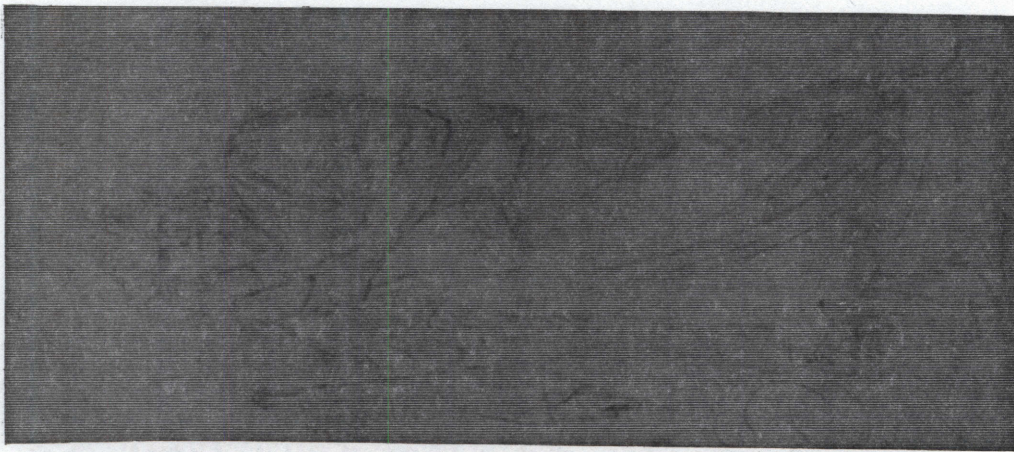


Fig. 15.

Fig. 16. Biagio Rebecca, *St. Simon*, oil on canvas. Photo by author.

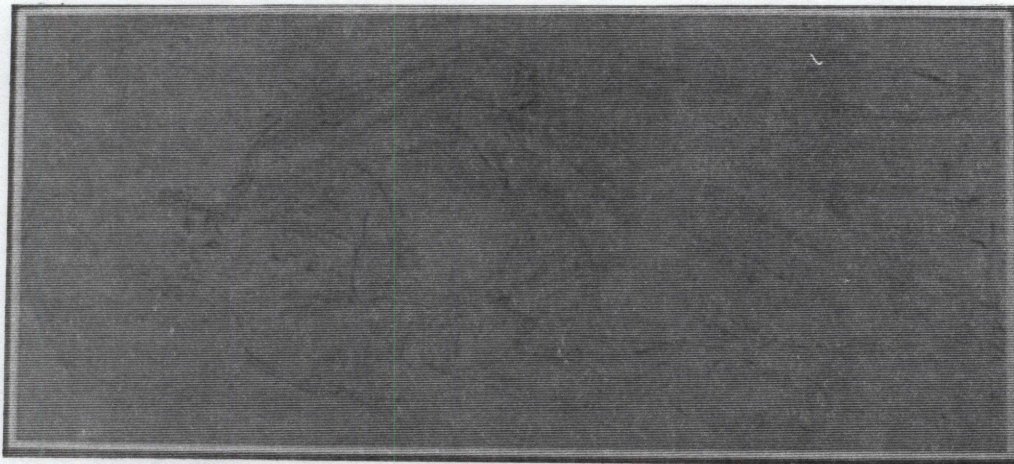


Fig. 17.

Fig. 17. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. James Major, 1788, pen and brown ink, brown wash. Photo by author.

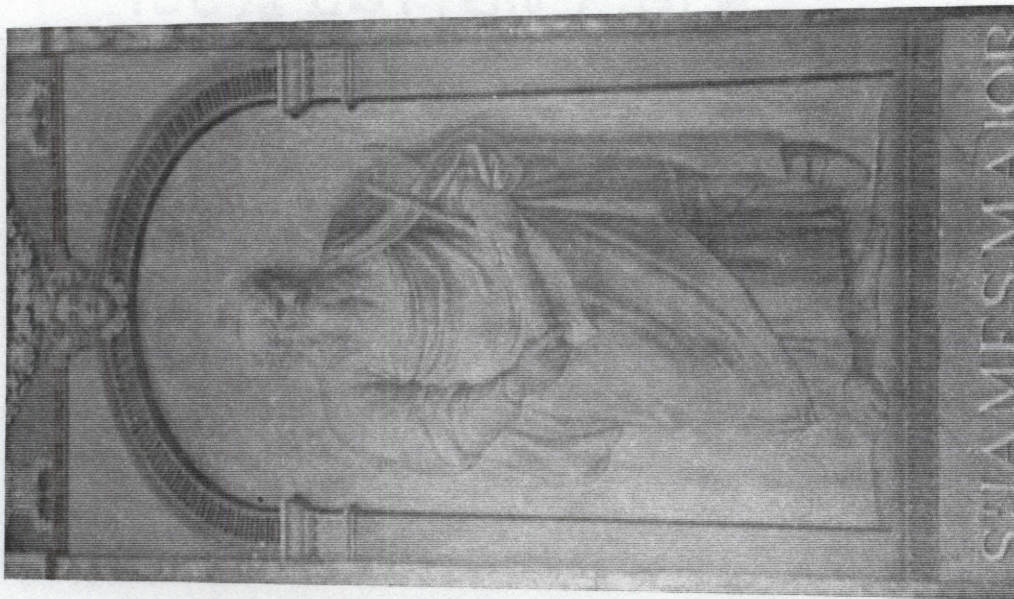


Fig. 18.

Fig. 18. Biagio Rebecca, *St. James Major*, oil on canvas. Photo by author.



Fig. 19.

Fig. 19. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. Luke, 1788, pen and brown ink, brown wash. Photo by author.



Fig. 20.

Fig. 20. Biagio Rebecca, *St. Luke*, oil on canvas. Photo by author.



Fig. 21.

Fig. 21. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. Matthew, 1788, pen and brown ink, brown wash. Photo by author.



Fig. 22.

Fig. 22. Biagio Rebecca, *St. Matthew*, oil on canvas. Photo by author.

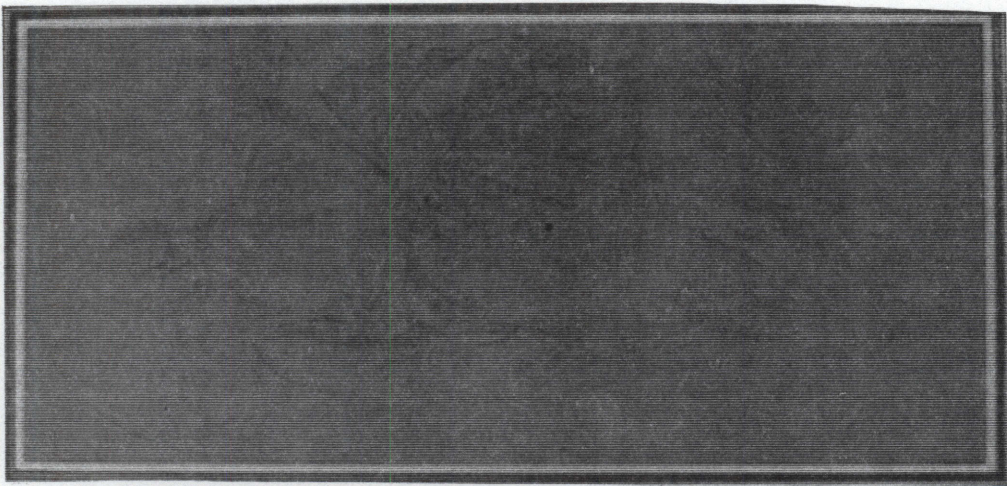


Fig. 23.

Fig. 23. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. Phillip, 1788, pen and brown ink, brown wash. Photo by author.



Fig. 24.

Fig. 24. Biagio Rebecca, *St. Phillip*, oil on canvas. Photo by author.

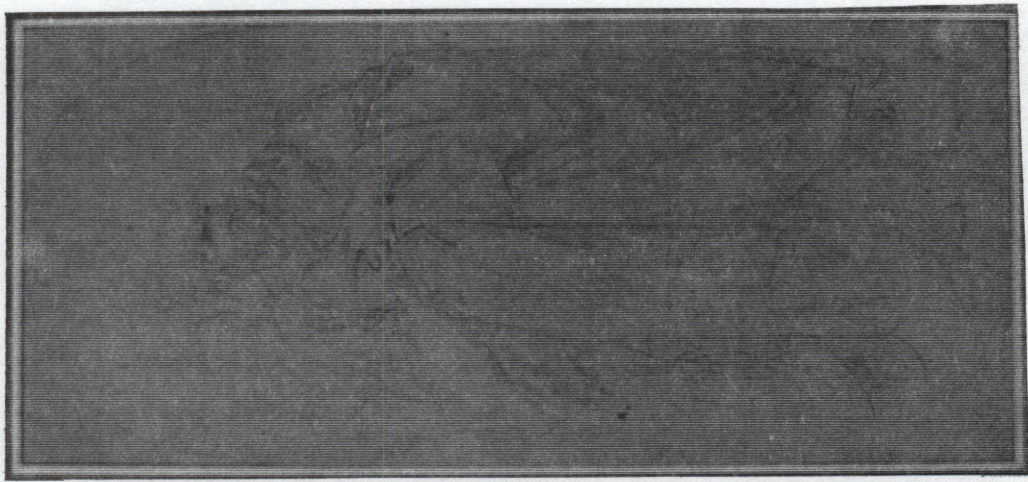


Fig. 25.

Fig. 25. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. Peter, 1788, pen and brown ink, brown wash. Photo by author.



Fig. 26.

Fig. 26. Biago Rebecca, *St. Peter*, oil on canvas. Photo by author.

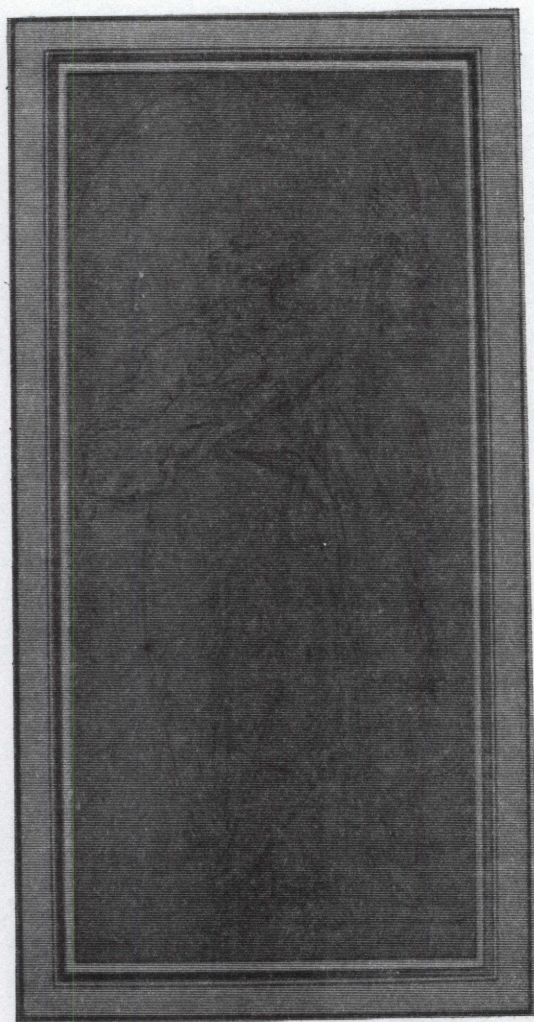


Fig. 27. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. Andrew, 1788, pen and brown ink, brown wash. Photo by author.

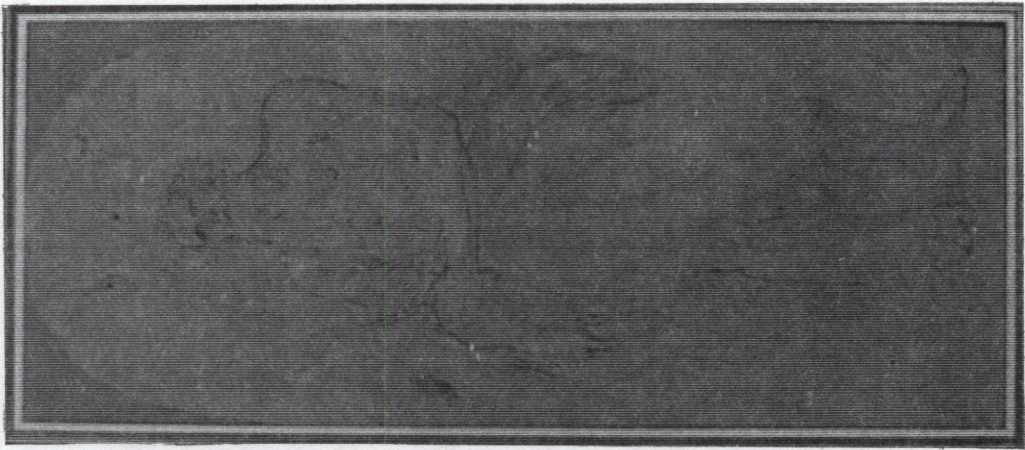


Fig. 28.

Fig. 28. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. Bartholomew, 1788, pen and brown ink, brown wash. Photo by author.



Fig. 29.

Fig. 29. Biago Rebecca, *St. Bartholomew*, oil on canvas. Photo by author.

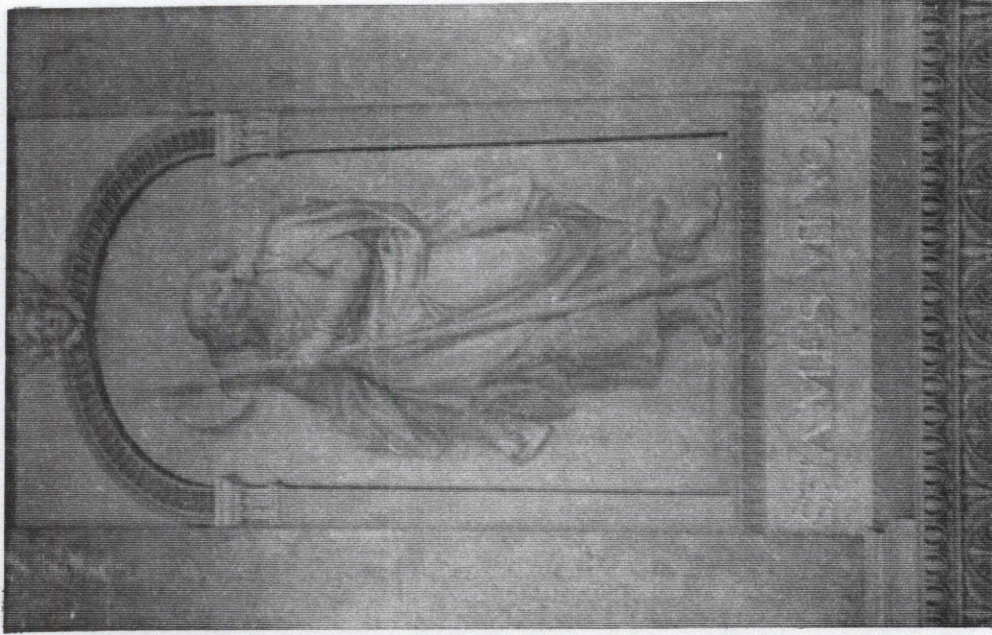


Fig. 31.



Fig. 30.

Fig. 30. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. James Minor, 1788, pen and brown ink, brown wash. Photo by author.

Fig. 31. Biago Rebecca, *St. James Minor*, oil on canvas. Photo by author.

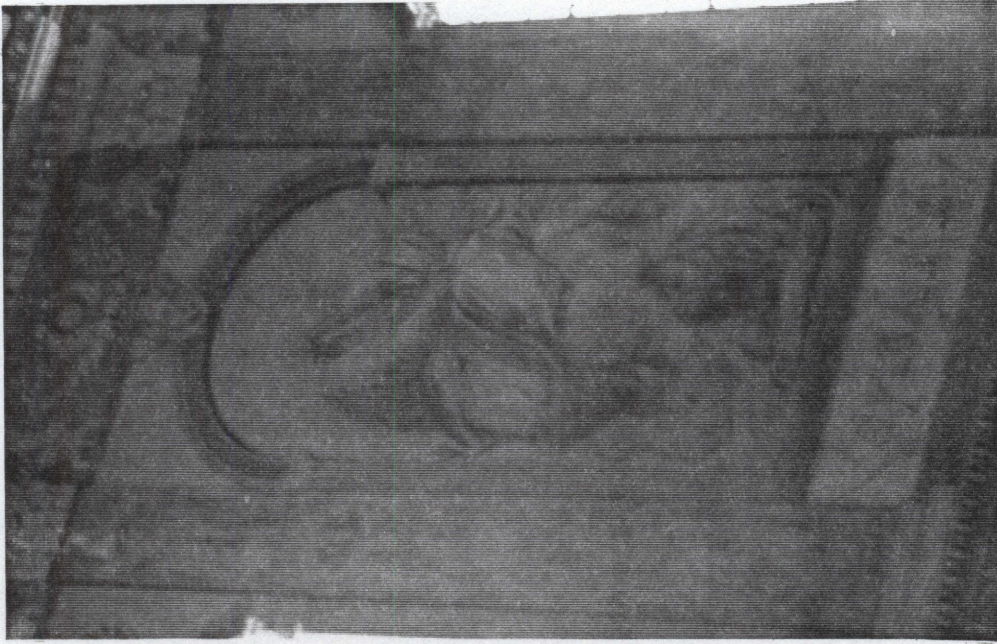


Fig. 33.

Fig. 32. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. Mark, 1788, pen and brown ink, brown wash. Photo by author.



Fig. 32.

Fig. 33. Biago Rebecca, *St. Mark*, oil on canvas. Photo by author.



Fig. 34. Biago Rebecca, *Moses*, oil on canvas.
Photo by author.



Fig. 35. Biago Rebecca, *Isaiah*, oil on the chapel wall.
Photo by author.



Fig. 36. BiagoRebecca, *David*, oil on canvas.
Photo by author.



Fig. 37.

Fig. 37. Benjamin West, Drawing of Conversion of St. Paul, 1788, pen and brown ink, brown wash, light blue wash. Photo by author.



Fig. 38.

Fig. 38. Richard Lawrence, *Conversion of St. Paul*, 1789, Coade stone. Photo by author.



Fig. 39.

Fig. 39. Richard Lawrence, *Vision of Cornelius*, 1789, Coade stone. Photo by author.



Fig. 40.

Fig. 40. Benjamin West, *Drawing of Vision of Cornelius*, 1788, pen and brown ink, brown wash. Photo by author.

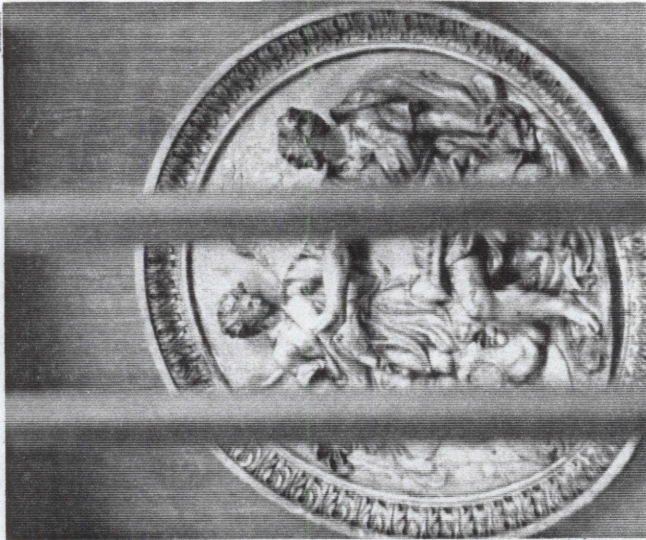


Fig. 41.

Fig. 41. Richard Lawrence, *St. Peter Released from Prison*, 1789, Coade stone. Photo by author.



Fig. 42.

Fig. 42. Benjamin West, *Drawing of St. Peter Released from Prison*, 1788, pen and brown ink, brown wash. Photo by author.



Fig. 44.

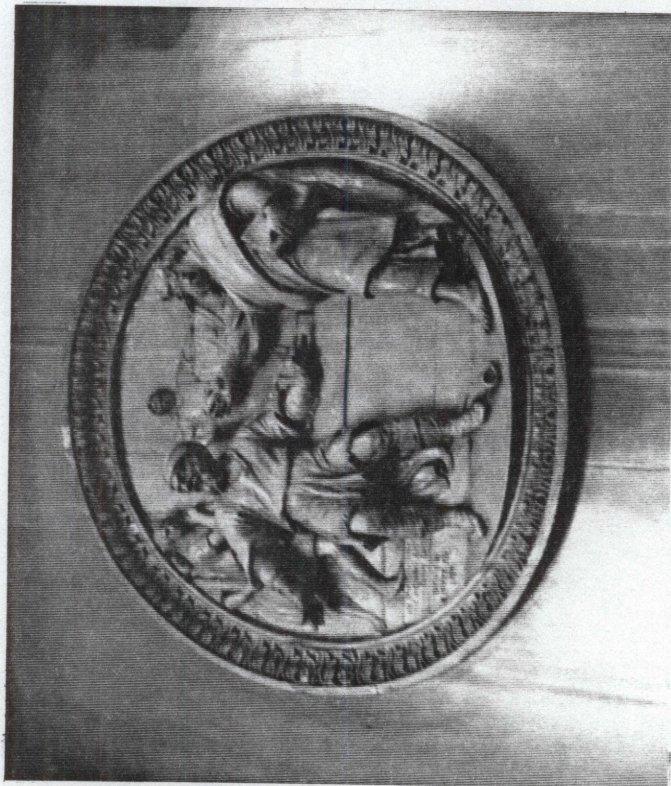


Fig. 43.

Fig. 43. Richard Lawrence, *Elymas Struck Blind*, 1789, Coade stone. Photo by author.

Fig. 44. Benjamin West, Drawing of *Elymas Struck Blind*, 1788, pen and brown ink, brown wash, light blue wash. Photo by author.



Fig. 45.

Fig. 45. Benjamin West, *Drawing of St. Paul Preaching at Athens*, 1788, pen and brown ink, brown wash. Photo by author.



Fig. 46.

Fig. 46. Richard Lawrence, *St. Paul Preaching at Athens*, 1789, Coade stone. Photo by author.



Fig. 47.

Fig. 47. Benjamin West, Drawing of St. Paul Before Felix, 1788, pen and brown ink, brown wash, light blue wash, white highlights. Photo by author.

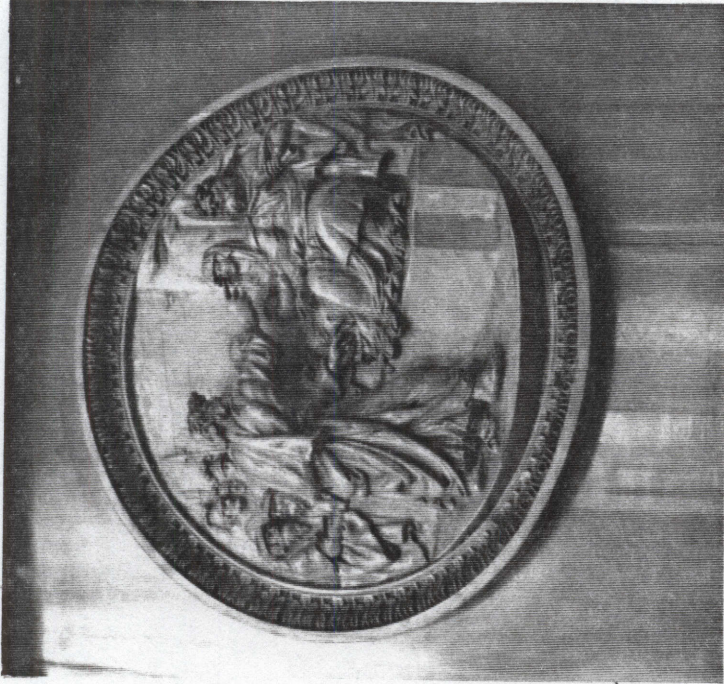


Fig. 48.

Fig. 48. Richard Lawrence, *St. Paul Before Felix*, 1789, Coade stone. Photo by author.



Fig. 49. Benjamin West,
Drawing of Micah, 1788,
pen and brown ink, brown
wash. Photo by author.



Fig. 50. Benjamin West,
Drawing of Daniel, 1788,
pen and brown ink, brown
wash. Photo by author.



Fig. 51. Benjamin West,
Drawing of Zachariah, 1788,
pen and brown ink, brown
wash. Photo by author.

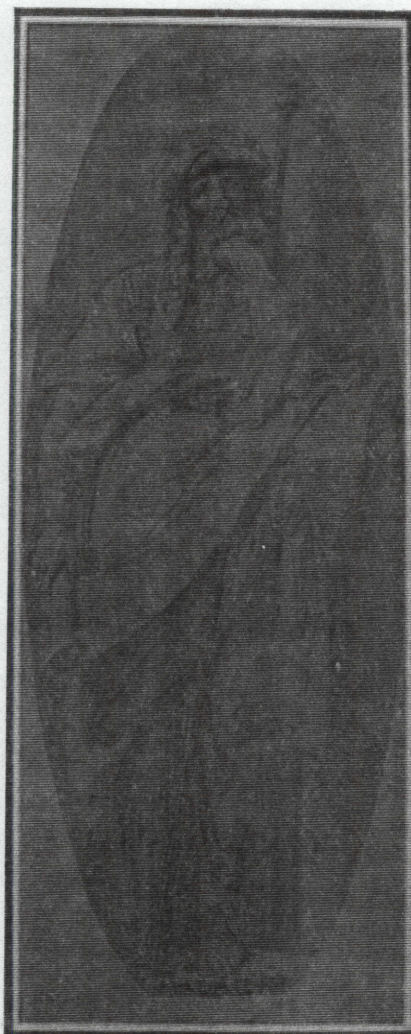


Fig. 52. Benjamin West,
Drawing of Malachi, 1788,
pen and brown ink, brown
wash. Photo by author.



Fig. 53. Benjamin West, Drawing of Faith,
pen and brown ink, brown wash.
Photo by author.

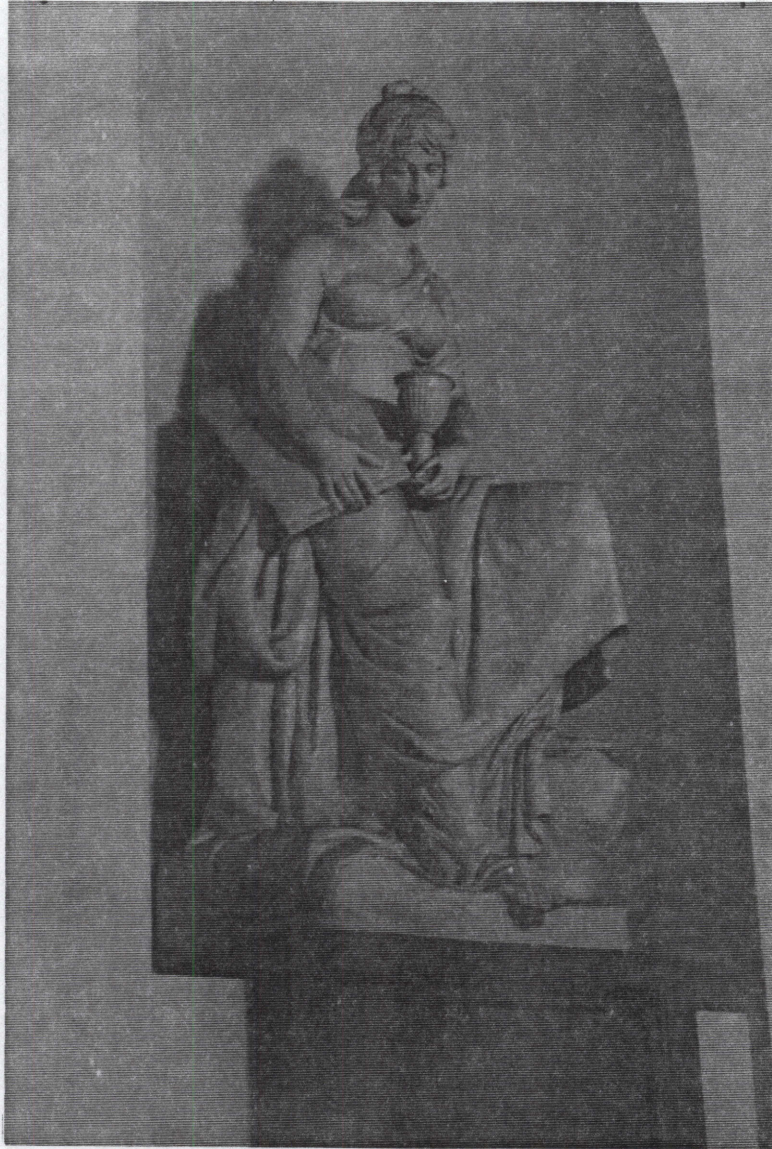


Fig. 54. Coade Factory, *Faith*, 1790, Coade stone.
Photo by author.



Fig. 55. Benjamin West, Drawing of Hope, pen and brown ink, brown wash, light blue wash, white highlights. Photo by author.



Fig. 56. Coade Factory, *Hope*, 1790, Coade stone.
Photo by author.



Fig. 57. Benjamin West, Drawing of Charity, 1789, pen and brown ink, brown wash.
Photo by author.



Fig. 58. Coade Factory, *Charity*, 1790, Coade stone.
Photo by author.



Fig. 59. Benjamin West, Drawing of Meekness, 1789, pen and brown ink, brown wash. Photo by author.

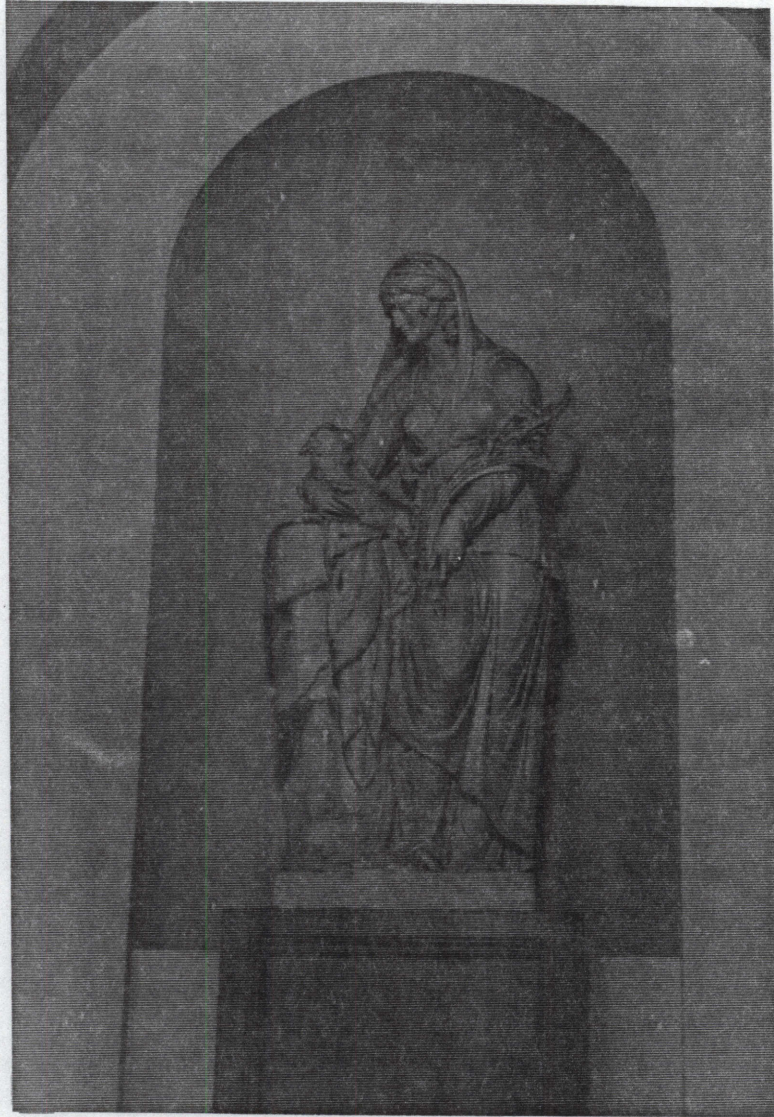


Fig. 60. Coade Factory, *Meekness*, 1790, Coade stone.
Photo by author.

WORKS CONSULTED

Abrams, Ann Uhry. *The Valiant Hero*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985.

Alberts, Robert C. *Benjamin West*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978.

American Painting. London: Tate Gallery, 1946.

Anderdon, James Hughs, ed. *Anderdon's Annotated Catalogue Scrapbook*. 26 Vols. Royal Academy catalogues. London, 1850-74.

Balch, Thomas, ed. *Letters and Papers Relating Chiefly to the Provincial History of Pennsylvania*. Philadelphia: Crissy & Markley, 1855.

Benjamin West, American Painter at the English Court. Baltimore: Schneidereith & Sons, 1989.

Borenius, Tancred. *English Painting in the Eighteenth Century*. London: J. Gifford, Limited, 1938.

Brooks, Alfred Mansfield. "Drawings by Benjamin West." *Art Bulletin* 8 (1925): 25-32.

Brown, Jonathan. *Murillo and His Drawings*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.

Burke, Joseph. *English Art 1714-1800*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1976.

Canary, Robert H. *William Dunlap*. New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1970.

The Complete Work of Raphael. New York: Reynol and Company, 1969.

Cooke, John and John Maule. *An Historical Account of the Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich*. Greenwich, England: Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich, 1789.

Croft-Murray, Edward. *Decorative Painting in England 1537-1837*. 2 Vols. Feltham, Middlesex: The Hamlyn Publishing Group Ltd., 1970.

- Cummings, Frederick. *Romantic Art in Britain 1760-1860*. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1968.
- Cunningham, Allan. *The Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters and Sculptors and Architects*. 5 Vols. London: John Murray, 1830-39.
- Dillenberger, John. *Benjamin West*. San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1977.
- Dunlap, William. *The Diary of William Dunlap*. Edited by Dorothy C. Barch. 3 Vols. New York: New York Historical Society, 1931.
- _____. *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Design in the United States*. Edited by Rita Weiss. New York: George P. Scott, 1834; Facsimile Reprint, 3 Vols. New York: Dover Publications, 1969.
- Ettlinger, Leopold D. and Helen S. *Raphael*. Oxford: Phaidon Press, Ltd., 1987.
- Evans, Dorinda. *Benjamin West and His American Students*. Washington, D.C.: National Portrait Gallery, 1980.
- Evans, Grose. *Benjamin West and the Taste of His Times*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1959.
- Farington, Joseph. *The Farington Diary*. Edited by James Greig. 8 Vols. London: Hutchinson, 1922-28.
- Fischer, Chris. *Fra Bartolommeo, Master Draughtsman of the High Renaissance*. Rotterdam: Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, 1990.
- Flexner, James Thomas. *America's Old Masters*. New York: The Viking Press, 1939.
- Fra Bartolommeo la Pieta' di Pitti restaurata*. Firenze: Centro Di della Edifimi srl., 1988.
- Fry, Roger. *Georgian Art 1760-1820*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929.
- Galt, John. *The Life, Studies and Works of Benjamin West, Esq., President of the Royal Academy of London. Composed from Materials Furnished by Himself*. 2 Vols. London: Cadell and Davies, 1816-1820.
- Gould, Cecil. *The Paintings of Correggio*. London: Faber & Faber Limited, 1976.

- Graves, Algernon. *Art Sales From early in the Eighteenth Century to early in the Twentieth Century*. 3 Vols. 1917; reprint, New York: Burt Franklin, 1970.
- Gunnis, Rupert. *Dictionary of British Sculptors 1660-1851*. London: The Abbey Library, 1951.
- Hall, James. *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art*. New York: Harper & Row, 1974.
- Hamilton, Olive, and Nigel Hamilton. *Royal Greenwich*. London: The Greenwich Bookshop, 1969.
- Harris, John. "The Architecture of the Williamite Court." In *The Age of William III and Mary II Power, Politics and Patronage*, eds. Robert P. Maccubbin and Martha Hamilton-Phillips, 225-233. Williamsburg, Virginia: The College of William and Mary, 1989.
- Henry, Matthew and Thomas Scott. *Commentary on the Holy Bible*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., 1979.
- Hofstadter, Dan. "In one great swoop, country bumpkin to Royal Academy." *Smithsonian* 20 (June 1989): 122-126.
- Holy Bible*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., 1975.
- Hunt, Leigh. *Autobiography of Leigh Hunt*. 2 Vols. London: Archibald Constable & Co. Ltd., 1903.
- The Index of Christian Art*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University, 1917.
- Irwin, David. *John Flaxman*. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1979.
- Jaffe, Irma B. *John Trumbull*. Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1975.
- Judson, Harry Pratt. *Caesar's Army*. New York: Biblo and Tannen, 1961.
- Kimball, Fiske, and Henri Marceau. *Benjamin West, 1738-1802*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Museum of Art, 1938.
- Kraemer, Ruth S. *Drawings by Benjamin West and his son Raphael Lamar West*. New York: The Pierpont Morgan Library, 1975.
- Lang-Sims, Lois. *Canterbury Cathedral*. London: Cassell Ltd., 1979.

- Lewis, Lesley. "The Architects Of The Chapel At Greenwich Hospital." *Art Bulletin* 29 (1947): 260-267.
- Maxfield, Valerie A. *The Military Decorations of the Roman Army*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1981.
- Meyer, Jerry D. "The Religious Paintings of Benjamin West: A Study in Late Eighteenth-Century and early Nineteenth-Century Moral Sentiment." Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1973.
- _____. "Benjamin West's Chapel of Revealed Religion: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Protestant Religious Art." *Art Bulletin*, June 1975, 247-265.
- _____. "Benjamin West's 'St. Stephen Altarpiece': a Study in late eighteenth-century Protestant Church Patronage and English History Painting." *Burlington Magazine* September 1976, 634-645.
- Morgan, John Hill. *Gilbert Stuart and His Pupils*. New York: Kennedy Galleries, Inc., 1969.
- Passavant, M. *Tour of a German Artist in England*. 2 Vols. London: Saunders and Otley, 1836.
- Pigler, Andor. *Barockthemen*. 3 Vols. Budapest: Akademiai Kiado, 1974.
- Poussin Sacraments and Bacchanals*. Edinburgh, Scotland: National Galleries of Scotland, 1981.
- Press Cuttings from English Newspapers on Matters of Artistic Interest 1686-1835*. 6 Vols. London: Victoria and Albert Museum.
- Pressley, Nancy L. *Revealed Religion: Benjamin West's Commissions for Windsor Castle and Fonthill Abbey*. San Antonio, Texas: 1983.
- Proun, Jules David. *John Singleton Copley*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966.
- Richardson, George. *Iconology*. 2 Vols. London: G. Scott, 1779; reprint as, *The Philosophy of Images*. edited by Stephen Orgel. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1979.

- Ripa, Cesare. *Cesare Ripa: Baroque and Rococo Imagery*. Germany: Johann Georg Hertel, 1758-60; Translated by Edward A. Moser. New York: Dover, 1971.
- Rosenblum, Robert. "Review of Benjamin West and the Taste of His Times." *Art Bulletin*, March 1960, 78.
- _____. *The Dawn of British Romantic Painting. Rococo to Romanticism: Art & Architecture 1700-1850*. New York: Garland Publishers, 1976.
- Rossi, Lino. *Trajan's Column and the Dacian Wars*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1971.
- Scott, Allan. *The Royal Naval College Greenwich*. West Yorkshire, England: Larkfield Printing Company Ltd., 1987.
- Shawe-Taylor, Desmond. *The Georgians: Eighteenth-Century Portraiture and Society*. London: Barrie & Jenkins, Ltd., 1990.
- Shearman, John. *Raphael's Cartoons*. London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1972.
- Sparks, Esther. "St. Paul Shaking Off the Viper." *Museum Studies* 6 Chicago Art Institute (1971): 59-65.
- Stainton, Lindsay and Christopher White. *Drawing in England from Hilliard to Hogarth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Strong, D.E. "'Athenian' Stuart And The Chapel Of 1789." In *A Short Guide To The Chapel Of St. Peter & St. Paul.*, Basil Watson, 21-23. Greenwich, England: Royal Naval College, Greenwich, 1955.
- Subject Catalogue of Paintings in Public Collections*. London: Visual Arts Publishing, 1989.
- Thompson, Stuart. *The Chapel, Royal Naval College, Greenwich*. Watford, Great Britain: Woodmansterne Publications Ltd., 1989.
- Unger, Merrill F. *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1957.
- von Erffa, Helmut. "Benjamin West reinterpreted." *Antiques*, June 1962, 630-633.
- _____. "Benjamin West at the Height of His Career." *American Art Journal* 1 (1969): 19-33.

- _____. "Benjamin West: The Early Years in London." *American Art Journal* 5 (1973): 4-14.
- von Erffa, Helmut, and Staley Allen. *The Paintings of Benjamin West*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986.
- Walker, R. W. "New Frontiers for West." *Art News* 88 (November 1989): 46.
- Warburg Institute, ed. *Index Iconologicus illustrating Adam von Bartsch's Le Peintre Graveur, Vienna 1802-1821*. Sanford, North Carolina: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1980. Text-fiche.
- Watson, Basil. *A Short Guide To The Chapel Of St. Peter & St. Paul*. Greenwich, England: Royal Naval College, Greenwich, 1955.
- Watson, George Ronald. *The Roman Soldier*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1969.
- Webster, Graham. *The Roman Imperial Army of the First and Second Centuries A.D.* London: A. & C. Black Limited, 1979.
- Weintraub, Stanley and Randy Ploog. *Benjamin West Drawings*. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Museum of Art, 1987.
- West, Benjamin. Collection of West Drawings. Ink and colored wash on paper. 1760's-1820. Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.
- West, Benjamin. Collection of West Drawings. Ink and colored wash on paper. 1760's-1820. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- West, Benjamin. Collection of West Drawings. Ink and colored wash on paper. 1788-1789. Greenwich Maritime Museum, London, England.
- Whinney, Margaret. *Sculpture in Britain 1530-1830*. London: Penguin Books, 1964.
- Whitley, William T. *Artists and Their Friends in England 1700-1700*. 2 Vols. London: Medici Society, 1928; reprint, New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968.