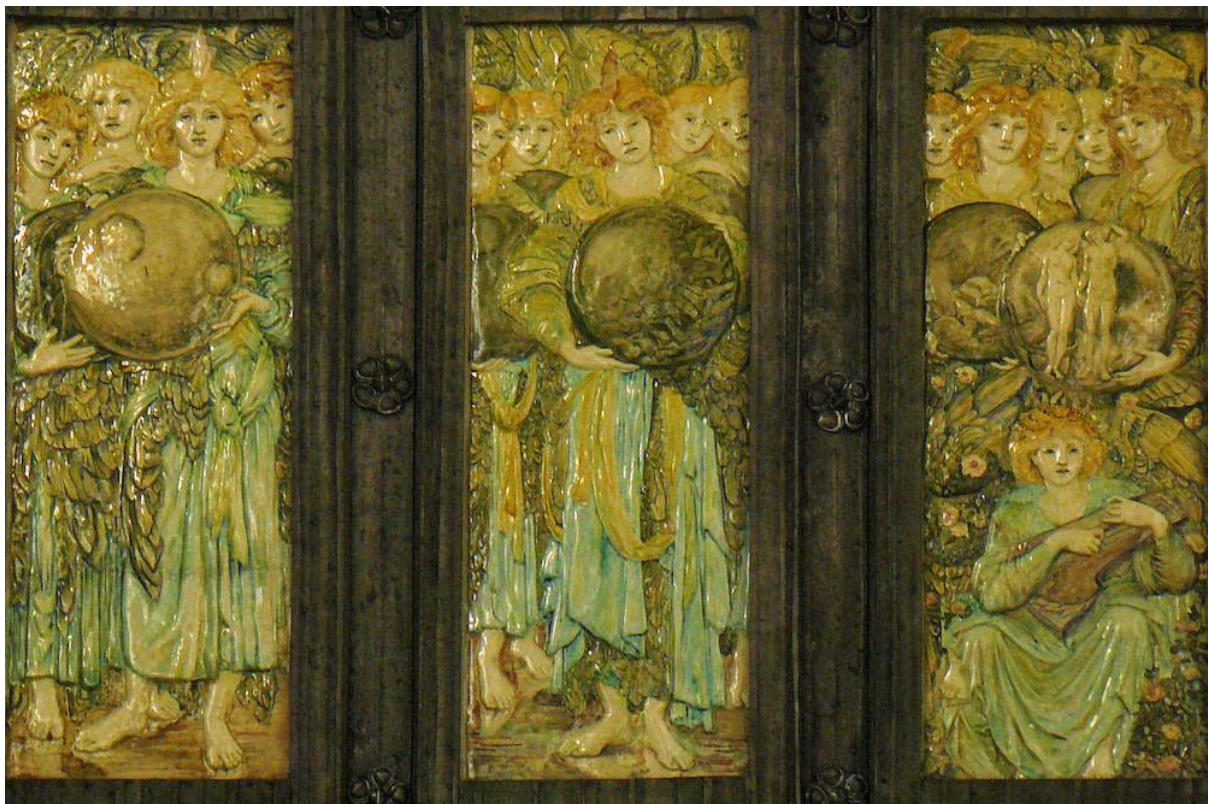




*The Six Days of Creation* designed by Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones, Bt ARA (1833-1898), described by John Newman as [Della Robbia](#) ware reliefs, and dated by him as 1893/1906, because it was completed, after Burne-Jones's death in 1898, by Harold Rathbone. The work is to be found in the Dyfrig Chapel at [Llandaff Cathedral](#), Cardiff.



Close-up of three of the panels.

Burne-Jones loved to depict richly feathered ministering or praising angels, in paintings, tapestry or stained glass. These however are the angels who demonstrate to us the story of creation, as told in the first chapter of Genesis. Perhaps it was no coincidence that when he first painted this subject in watercolour, in the early to mid-1870s — having designed it in 1870 and

finished it in 1876 (see "The Days of Creation," and his wife's *Memorials*, 67) — people were still trying to absorb or refute Darwin's theory of evolution.



*The Days of Creation: six watercolour panels set in a frame, shown here in three photographs, i.e. three sets of two, photographed by Frederick Hollyer (Bell, Plates XX-XXII). Click to enlarge.*

In one panel after another, an angel comes to the fore holding a globe, rather like a large crystal ball (Burne-Jones was fond of those, too). At first, only the one angel appears, to be superseded by another in the next panel, and so on, until all six are present in the last panel. As for the angel at the front, each presents a scene associated with the particular day of creation: trees on the third day, for example, a flock of birds on the fifth. The scenes are easier to see in the earlier, painted versions given above, than in the ceramic version, which catches the light. But even in the painted version they are still to some extent mysterious, suggesting more than they show, except perhaps for the last one, of a pale and slender Eve, with a taller, darker Adam. In front of this one, one of the angels is sitting, and playing a stringed instrument — no doubt praising God for the creation. The conception is altogether worthy of the artist, and the globes add a thrilling touch of mystery, or miracle.



Photographs by [Colin Price](#). Black-and-white images downloaded by [Jacqueline Banerjee](#), who also added the text. You may use these images without prior permission for any scholarly or educational purpose as long as you (1) credit the photographer or source and (2) link your document to this URL in a web document or cite the *Victorian Web* in a print one.

## Related Material

- *The Days of Creation* (watercolour set)
- The Creation Stories of Genesis

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