

Arthur Altham Dawson



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Vicar 1864-1871

A church where the old-fashioned principles of the Prayer Book, at present little valued in Ireland, have been openly preached and practised.

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IT WAS in the eighteen sixties, when the disestablishment controversy was raging and the very existence of the Church of Ireland was thought to be imperilled, that the first moves were made towards the founding of a church in Ballsbridge. The population of that district was rapidly growing, and the character of the area was changing. In 1861-2 what is now the portion of Clyde Road between Raglan Road and Wellington Place was merely a continuation of Raglan Road. In 1866 the stretch from Raglan Road to Elgin Road was opened and the entire thoroughfare from Wellington Place to Elgin Road was designated Clyde Road.¹ In the open field along Raglan Road (that is, the portion now named Clyde Road) in winter many snowmen and snow castles were erected with frequent snowball battles. In 1869 the *Church of England Magazine*, reporting on the new parish, said that a few years ago green fields, not houses, surrounded the site.²

Dr Richard Whately, to whom Newman avowedly owed the beginnings of his insight into the nature of the Church, was archbishop of Dublin at the time when the new parish was being formed. He looked with favour on the project and promised £500 towards defraying the cost. The ground landlord, Lord Herbert of Lea, had promised a site, but his death in 1861 had delayed the process. In what would appear to be an undated draft from Whately ("The Palace, Dublin") to 'My dear

¹ Arthur Altham Dawson, *A short account of St Bartholomew's Church Dublin* (Dublin, 1871) Based on an account of the development of the area written by Joshua C. Manley, RCB Library, Poo64/27/11. 'correspondence and papers of and relating to Canon Walter Simpson, 1909-60.

² 7 Aug. 1869.

Lord (presumably Lord de Vesci, uncle by marriage and trustee for Herbert's heir, who was a minor), we read

There is a considerable district on the Dublin side of the Dodder River in the neighbourhood of the village of Ballsbridge, which has within the last two years, been laid out for building, and is with a surprising rapidity becoming covered with first-class houses, and likely before another year to be fully occupied. In the leasing out of the ground, I find that the late Lord Herbert, with a wise foresight, directed a certain spot to be reserved for the site of a church to meet the religious requirements of the expected population of the district.

That Church has already become a necessity, so much so, that any delay in providing one is likely to lead to much inconvenience, and perhaps to some movement in (sic!) behalf of Dissent; as all the churches nearest to it are already overcrowded.

He adds that he has obtained from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners a promise to build a church to accommodate 500 persons ('much too small, as I apprehend') on the condition of the District being made *parochial* with the requisite legal endowment of £50 a year as a basis for the maintenance of a minister and also provided that a sum of not less than £2,500 towards the building fund be lodged with their Treasurer by the end of next July.³

That a place of worship under the auspices of 'the United Church of England and Ireland' was contemplated need not cause surprise, since this growing suburban district was seen as catering for the professional and other wealthy classes in the area, one third of whom were Protestant and largely members of the Established Church. According to the *Report of the Royal Commission on Municipal Boundaries*, Protestants constituted 40% of the population of the township of Pembroke in 1871,⁴ and the Deed for erecting 'the Church of Saint Bartholomew's Pembroke District into a perpetual cure', dated 13 October 1864, referred to the 'considerable number of Protestant inhabitants for ... whom the adjoining parishes of St Peter's and St Mary's [Donnybrook] cannot conveniently repair'.⁵

A recent treatment of the area⁶ describes it as 'the most prestigious

of the suburbs', whose developers were the rising Catholic middle class who 'probably had more in common with their middle class unionist neighbours than with Catholics in the tenements'.

The 1860s were highly significant years in the history of Ballsbridge, in the course of which, like other suburbs such as Rathmines and Rathgar, it became a 'township' with a degree of local autonomy. Yet while waterworks and fire-fighting might to some extent now come under the commissioners of Pembroke Township, and the fast-developing Elgin and Clyde roads taken into its charge,⁷ the influence, even power, of the Herbert family, earls of Pembroke (as seen in the name of the new township) continued largely undiminished. Seven ninths of its territory belonged to the Pembroke Estate, ensuring, as modern authorities have acknowledged, that it became the 'enclave of large and substantial houses, wide, tree-lined roads and pleasant vistas that it remains to this day'.⁸ It was the Pembroke Estate that provided the site and two-thirds of the funding for the new Town Hall (the architect being the father of Sir Edward Carson, the Unionist politician).⁹ Furthermore, the agent of the Estate, John Vernon, was an ex-officio member of the body of commissioners who had charge of the new township which held its initial meeting at his office in Wilton Place on the Grand Canal.

The late Lord Herbert referred to in Whately's letter was none other than Sidney Herbert (1810-1861), younger son of the Earl, who managed the vast Pembroke and Fitzwilliam estates in England and Ireland, the heir spending most of his time on the continent for health reasons. Sidney Herbert was a prominent politician, confidant and close friend of Gladstone.¹⁰ Herbert had spent his formative under-graduate years at Oriel College, Oxford, where he was much influenced by Newman, Pusey and other leaders of what came to be known as the Tractarian Movement: his tutor was Richard Hurrell Froude.¹¹ Herbert died young, but his widow, Lady Herbert of Lea, herself a devout member of the Church of England (who in 1886 was received into the

³ RCB Library, Whately papers, MS 707/1/4/5.

⁴ *Report of the Royal Commission on Municipal boundaries*, H.C. 1881 (2725), p.532

⁵ Copy in RCB Library, P.0246.12.1. This document defines the parish boundaries.

⁶ Susan Galivan, *Dublin's bourgeois homes: building the Victorian suburbs, 1850-1901* (London, 2017), p.56

⁷ Dublin City Archives, Pembroke Township Archives, minute book 1 (1863-8), 1 Aug. 1864.

⁸ Joseph Brady and Anngret Simms (ed.), *Dublin through the ages, c900-1900* (Dublin, 2001), pp 266-7

⁹ Séamus O Mailliú, *Dublin's suburban towns, 1834-1900* (Dublin, 2003), p.56.

¹⁰ Lord Stanmore, *Sidney Herbert, Lord Herbert of Lea: a memoir* (London, 1906), p.10; John Morley, *The life of William Ewart Gladstone* (3 vols, London, 1903), ii, 88, "perhaps the best beloved of all his [Gladstone's] friends".

¹¹ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

Roman Catholic Church), maintained her late husband's interest in the new 'Pembroke District Church', the name by which the project was known in its initial stages.

Lady Herbert corresponded with Vernon, the estate's Irish agent, on the matter of the new church and espoused the candidature of Thomas Wyatt for appointment as architect.¹² Regarded by John Betjeman as 'one of the dullest Victorian architects'¹³ Wyatt was held in high regard by the Herbert family having designed many of the churches on their extensive Wiltshire estates.¹⁴ Professor Alistair Rowan maintains that "there is nothing dull about his work at St Bartholomew's and that it remains to this day the most striking example of Anglican [Church of Ireland] High Church design in Ireland. Both in its architecture and interior decoration it is, in many ways unique."¹⁵

Most of Elgin Road had been built by 1864 and the original plan for the area envisaged villas at the angle between Elgin and Clyde Roads, where the church now stands.¹⁶ Clyde Road, named after Sir Colin Campbell (Lord Clyde), whose relief of Lucknow was a turning point in the suppression of the Indian Mutiny, was almost completed by 1870. It is interesting to note that the *Dublin Builder* described the church as being 'situated on the Elgin-road',¹⁷ and that the Elgin Road approach to the church is by a broad sweep, whereas that from Clyde Road follows a narrow path.

Writing to Archdeacon Lee of Dublin, Lady Herbert regretted that she would be unable to be present at the laying of the foundation stone as she would be in Palermo 'on account of Lord Pembroke's health'.¹⁸ The honours were performed by Viscount de Vesci, who was *au courant* with matters related to the new church (and shared Lady Herbert's high opinion of Wyatt). In a cavity in the stone was placed a bottle with the following inscription on parchment:

The Parochial District of S. Bartholomew's having been duly constituted by the Lord Archbishop of Dublin out of the parishes of St Peter and St Mary Donnybrook, and a site for a church having been granted by the guardians of the Earl of Pembroke (under authority of the court of Chancery) and funds contributed for the building of the same partly by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for Ireland, and partly by private subscription, this foundation stone was solemnly laid with prayer and praise to the Most Holy Trinity, by Thomas, third Viscount de Vesci, on the Festival of the Ascension of Our Lord, 1865.

Upon the trowel was inscribed: 'Presented to the Viscount de Vesci by the Building Committee of the Church of St Bartholomew's, Dublin, on the occasion of his laying the first stone, Ascension Day, 1865 [which fell on 24 May]'.¹⁹

Work on the building proceeded, if slowly, under the supervision of the Committee for Promoting the Erection of Pembroke District Church which had held its first meeting in May 1864. Comprising twenty members (several of the laity eventually serving on the select vestry of the parish), the clerical committee members included Richard Travers Smith, senior curate of St Stephen's (the rector of that parish being Archdeacon Lee) and Arthur Altham Dawson (the new archbishop's domestic chaplain, Whately having died in October 1863, and having been succeeded by Richard Chenevix Trench). Smith did much of the fund-raising for the new church and had been appointed vicar-designate, while Dawson kept the minutes.²⁰ The committee had a dual purpose: to raise sufficient money to erect the church and to supervise the designing and construction of the building, and there was lengthy correspondence with the builder about such aspects as ensuring that it was adequately heated.²¹

A cause of some controversy, and one which also touched on Lady Herbert, was the appointment of the first minister to the parish. In October 1863, Archbishop Whately was succeeded by Richard Chenevix Trench, dean of Westminster. Two months later, the dean of St Patrick's,

¹² Lady Herbert to Vernon, 1 July 1863, NAI, 1011/2/21/3, 'Pembroke District Church'

¹³ John Betjeman, *Collins guide to English parish churches* (London, 1958), p. 387.

¹⁴ See Patrick Comerford, 'The Wyatt family: influencing generations of architectural style in these islands' (*Church Review* [Dublin and Glendalough Diocesan Magazine] June 2017, pp4-5.) Also 'The Wyatt family of Wexford: a Lichfield architectural dynasty' (revpatrickcomerford@gmail.com)

¹⁵ See Chapter VII by Professor Rowan.

¹⁶ Eve McAuley, 'The origins and early development of the Pembroke Estate beyond the Grand canal', TCD PhD thesis, 2003, i, 179, 188.

¹⁷ 1 February 1868.

¹⁸ Lady Herbert to Lee, 23 Sept. 1864. NAI, 1011/2/21

¹⁹ Building Committee minute book (RCB, p64. 5. 1). The process by which the building came into being, and subsequent enhancement of the interior is dealt with in considerable detail by Professor Alistair Rowan in Chapters 7 & 8 below. The author is deeply grateful to Professor Rowan for his generosity in contributing the fruits of his work on St Bartholomew's, which sheds new light on the importance of the church.

²⁰ This account of the appointment of the first vicar is based on R.S. Longworth-Dames, *Notes on the history of the church and parish of St. Bartholomew* (Dublin, 1908)

²¹ RCB Library, p. 64/27/1-4.

Henry Pakenham, died and was succeeded in the deanery by Archdeacon West, a change of much consequence for St Bartholomew's since the new archdeacon, William Lee, who held the patronage of St Bartholomew's, ignored Smith's claim and appointed Dawson to be vicar-designate. Smith wrote to Lee, remonstrating with him for what he felt to be a serious breach of faith.

The archdeacon replied:

Some years ago, when the idea was first started of this district church, my pupil[at TCD] and friend Arthur Dawson spoke to me on the subject, expressing his great desire to become the minister of this church which was to be erected within Herbert property. I entered warmly into his wishes, and, so far as I could, helped to bring his name to Lady Herbert. When the papers and documents were handed to me by Dean West, he mentioned that he had intended to nominate you. No intimation of his, however, could have any binding on me – and in accordance with my previous action in the matter, I offered the appointment to Mr Dawson, who has accepted it. Had he not accepted it, or had I not been previously interested in this appointment, I hope that you will credit me when I say that it would have given me sincere pleasure to have placed the nomination in your hand.

There the matter rested. The new parish was officially constituted in 1864 (one of its claims to note being that, then, no other place of worship lay within its boundaries). It is pleasant to record that, however disappointed Smith had been at the time, he wrote to Dawson some years later expressing the view that Dawson's had been the right appointment at the time.²²

Shortly afterwards, another disagreement arose, this time relating to the dedication of the new church which had been given the working title of 'Pembroke District Church'. It would appear from correspondence between Archdeacon Lee, Vernon and Dawson that the vicar-designate was unhappy with the proposal to dedicate the church to St Bartholomew. Apparently both Lee and Dawson would have preferred 'All Saints', on the grounds that scarcely anything was known about St Bartholomew. Furthermore, a consideration with Dawson was that members of the congregation were more likely to be in Dublin for the Dedication Commemoration on All Saints Day (1 November) than on the Feast of St Bartholomew (24 August). However, having been

informed by Archdeacon Lee that 'it is impossible to change the name of the church, he acquiesced. After all, 'the palace is for God and not for men', and not dedicated to any saint, but to 'the King of Saints'.²³

So far as fund-raising was concerned, Dawson wrote:

... I found about five hundred pounds in the hands of the Building Committee when I was appointed to the incumbency in March 1864; the greater part having been contributed on the understanding that the donors were to have pews allotted to them in proportion to their subscriptions. Convinced of the importance of restoring Freedom of Worship in all parish churches and considering that a favourable opportunity of making the attempt was here presented, I at once, with the consent of the archbishop of Dublin, issued an address to the inhabitants of the new parish on the subject. I pointed out the evils of pews and pew-rents, and the advantages of Free and Open churches and free-will offerings; and asked those who had already subscribed either to release the committee from any engagement to assign private seats to them, or to allow me to refund their donations, and make myself responsible for the amount.²⁴

In fact, only one subscriber withdrew his donation, and Dawson set about enlisting support by such means as sending the foregoing address to the 'Friends of S.P.G' and a body known as the 'Friends of freedom of worship'. He was supported by the archbishop who, in his charge to the clergy in 1865 referred to 'the very interesting and important experiment the success of which, however we may be embarrassed now by the complications of another system, we must all so earnestly desire'.

Dawson's faith was vindicated and £2,531 was raised by voluntary subscription; which sum, together with £3,228 granted by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, £1,512 from the trustees of Lord Pembroke's Estate, £500 left by Marshal Beresford for Church extension in Ireland, and Archbishop Whately's £500 – a total of £8,271 which well covered the cost of building the church, apart from the spire and bells. By Ascension Day 1865 sufficient funds were in hand for the work to get under way.

Wyatt's architectural plans for St Bartholomew's were critically examined by the Building Committee, and he was asked if it would not be better to have side aisles to the church instead of transepts, since the transept congregation could not see the officiating clergy. However, on

²³ Dawson to Vernon, 26 Sept 1864 (NAI 1911/2/21/3)

²⁴ Arthur A. Dawson, *A short account of S. Bartholomew's Church, Dublin* (Dublin, 1871), p. 4

²² Longworth Dames, *St Bartholomew's*, p. 34

being assured by Wyatt that such a change would take away from the appearance of the building without appreciably lowering the cost, the committee acquiesced. Another point on which he put their minds at rest was the question of whether or not the church would be sufficiently well lit inside.

Interestingly enough, the chosen builder, James Scanlan, was not among those recommended by the architects of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners (in whom Lady Herbert and the family had little confidence), regarding them, in Lady Herbert's word, as 'hopeless'.²⁵ Scanlan, a Dublin builder, was known to the family (and Wyatt) for his work on the de Vesce home at Abbeyleix and on St Michael and All Angels Church at Clane, Co Kildare, a Tractarian building, very much under the patronage of the Trench family, and 'generally regarded as one of the most beautiful churches in Ireland'.²⁶

By February 1866 the walls of the church had been raised and all was ready for the roof. But funds were running out and a fresh appeal was launched to bring in sufficient money to finish the tower and spire – the drawings circulated in connection with all previous appeals had shown an elegant spire crowning the building. As the result of a wide canvas that embraced, for example, all members of the SPCK and included appeals in the Dublin newspapers and the sending of letters to all householders in the district, sufficient contributions were forthcoming to complete the tower without a spire, and the church was ready for consecration by Archbishop Trench on 23 December 1867.

The *Dublin Daily Express* gave an account of the ceremony on the following day

The new church of St Bartholomew was consecrated yesterday by His Grace the Archbishop of Dublin, in the presence of a large congregation... His Grace, accompanied by the Dean of St Patrick's and the Archdeacon was received at the west entrance of the church by the Incumbent, Curate, churchwardens and a number of clergy in canonicals.

The usual petition having been read, His Grace signified his willingness to accede to its prayer, and the procession moved towards the chancel where the Archbishop said the appointed prayers in the Consecration Service. The usual Morning Prayers were then said by the incumbent, and after these the Communion Service was commenced by the Archbishop, assisted by

²⁵ Lady Herbert to Vernon, 1 July 1863, NAI, 1011/2/21

²⁶ Rowan, 'Notes'; Claude Costecalde & Brian Walker (eds.), *The Church of Ireland: an illustrated history* (Shankill, Dublin, p.320).

the Archdeacon and the Revd A. Dawson, as Gospeller and Epistoler.

His Grace preached from St John i, 51, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man'. After alluding to the beautiful architecture of the church in which they were assembled, His Grace went on to say:

We begin a little to perceive that God is fitly served with our best and not with our worst in that we honour Him more in our costlier than our cheapest gifts. On an occasion not much unlike the present there were some words spoken by the Archbishop of York whom I met with a few days ago and cannot refuse myself the pleasure of quoting. 'No one', he said, 'can have entered many of our churches in past years without seeing too plainly that man's indolence and selfishness may creep even into his worship. The church tottering, uncared for, smelling of mildew, blotched with damp, opening its doors to a few worshippers to whom the notion of Common Prayer—prayer opened up by a loving brotherhood, anxious to show their love of the Lord who had redeemed them—would have seemed altogether strange. Secluded by twos and threes in separate cells, which they were prepared sternly to defend against all invasion, they heard the minister and clerk, but added no word of their own to that vicarious repentance; they allowed the psalms to be said in alternate verses by the same deputies; they listened to hymns sung by children in some distant corner; and this was worship! This the church that was meant to symbolise God's throne and presence.'

Archbishop Trench continued:

Let me take the opportunity of saying that in this church none of these distinctions here spoken of will exist, all the seats in it being free and unappropriated. It will follow that the maintenance of divine worship and of the ministering clergy must depend on the offertory. The experiment, if successful, will probably carry with it important and valuable results on a far wider scale than that of this parish.

The *Express* concluded its report by saying that his Grace expressed the hope that the church might prove the Gate of Heaven to all who worshipped in it.²⁷ The Holy Communion was then celebrated and the Deed of Consecration signed. There will be Divine Service daily at St Bartholomew's at 10 and 5.

Subsequent editions of the *Express* were less dispassionate in their

²⁷ The analogy to a gate was one favoured by Archbishop Trench who used it some years later at the consecration of the afore-mentioned St Michael and All Angels, Clane, (Kenneth Milne, *Richard Chenevix Trench 1807-1886* (Dublin, 2010), p.19).

reporting of events at St Bartholomew's, and as the newspaper had a circulation that was twice that of its nearest rival its hostility must have occasioned widespread interest.²⁸

These were years of political scares in Ireland, affecting the Protestant community in particular, and an abortive Fenian rebellion had taken place in March. Now alarmists saw in the spread of ritualism from England the additional peril of something not much less than a popish plot. At the ceremony of Consecration there was little to take exception to in the furnishings of St Bartholomew's. No stained glass windows, no frescoes, no brass crosses, nor was there even a reredos. Nevertheless, a leading article in the *Express* had this to say:

Much distrust and alarm have already been excited by the architectural features of the church, while the general character and tendency of the services evince a more open sympathy with practices and doctrines altogether foreign to the spirit of our reformed church.²⁹

There follows a description of the morning service on Christmas Day. The curate assistant emerged from the vestry 'arrayed in full soutane', and the prayers were intoned in a 'kind of monotonous wail'. A rather discouraging image of the preferred standard of deportment was implied by the criticism that 'whenever the clergyman approached the altar...he departed himself with great solemnity, and in a subdued and reverential manner.'

According to a further comment that the same newspaper made on the Monday following the first Sunday service, six hundred people attended Mattins and Holy Communion, and, for fear of disturbances, plain-clothed policemen were present.

The *Express* and many of its correspondents took exception to the use of the word 'altar', even the verger had "caught the tone of his superiors" and was using the term. Moreover, this was no decent table of wood, as prescribed by the rubrics of the *Book of Common Prayer*, bedecked as it was with the "gewgaws of clerical millinery", but was clearly contrary to law by being upon "a raised structure of stone or tiles two or three feet in height".

Perhaps the most intriguing of the many letters published at the time (mainly critical of St Bartholomew's) was the following:

The barque of ritualism having been now proudly launched in our archiepiscopal see, the best thing about it is that it has hoisted its true colours from the onset. Therefore we may hope that the unwary will not (seduced either by the alluring music or insidious teaching) take passage in the ship. Whose planks are but rotten timbers, gaudily painted over... Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

The obloquy directed at the Vicar in those early days was shared by his assistant, the Revd Frederick Tymons, whose churchmanship was akin to that of Dawson, and, lest the impression is given that the initial years at St Bartholomew's were times of unrelieved gloom and stress, it is worth quoting Longworth-Dames again, who knew both priests intimately, and wrote that because the vicar was pale and somewhat ascetic-looking and his curate stout and jovial, it was rumoured in the parish that they divided between them the fasts and feasts of the Church.³⁰

Some indication of Tymons's theological position may be gleaned from a letter of his to another newspaper, *Saunders's Newsletter*, at the height of the Disestablishment controversy in 1869, aroused by the decision of the house of bishops to sit and vote as a separate order in the General Synod. Tymons contended that the issue was one of episcopal as against presbyterian church government. Either the bishops had or had not divinely conferred authority by virtue of consecration, and if they had, surely it must be wrong to coerce them to adopt measures of which they disapproved.

According to a sermon preached in 1925 by Canon Robert Baker Stoney, Rector of Holy Trinity, Killiney, and Treasurer of Christ Church Cathedral (who is credited with designing the mosaic floor of the sanctuary in St Bartholomew's), it was Tymons who did most to establish the choral services there. He vacated the assistant curacy in 1872, having held that position throughout the incumbency of the first vicar, and as a parting gift presented the reredos of the High Altar.

The first organist and choirmaster was William Henry Owen. To his lot fell the task of implementing the music policy of the clergy, a notable feature of which was the use of plainsong. Though the *Express* dismissed the music at St Bartholomew's as 'much sound and little music', plainsong was apparently found quite acceptable by the congregation, many of whom, to judge by press reports of their acts of personal

²⁸ For circulation figures see 30 December 1867. *The Irish Times* came next in popularity.

²⁹ 26 December 1867.

³⁰ Longworth-Dames, *Notes*, p.7.

devotion, were conversant with such things. Two windows in the chancel were erected to commemorate Owen's death in a railway accident at Abergele in Wales in 1868. "The most extraordinary and fatal accident ever known on an English railway", according to the *Times* of London,³¹ when a portion of a goods train collided with the Irish Mail, causing petroleum at the rear of the goods train to explode. The other three windows in the sanctuary were erected in thanksgiving that no fatalities occurred when a pinnacle fell from the tower in the same year.³² These five windows represent the Nativity, Baptism, Sermon on the Mount, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Commissioning of the Apostles and Ascension. Angels with musical instruments fill the roundels of the Owen windows.

The windows were dedicated in 1869 and in that same year the Building Committee, its work done, was dissolved and a special committee was established to raise funds for furnishing the church. Already in place was the pulpit (presented by Archbishop Trench). Resting on a solid base of Irish marble, it has columns of Cork marble and coned caps of Caen stone. Likewise of Caen stone are the font and the credence and piscina in the sanctuary. The lectern also dates from this period, presented in 1867 by Frances Dawson (Dawson's mother). The altar, sedelia and choir stalls are of oak.

Under the terms of the Irish Church Act of 1869 the Church of Ireland was disestablished from 1 January 1871. It ceased to be the state Church and lost many of its financial assets. However, those in receipt of income from the pre-Disestablished Church were provided for, among them being William Knott, sexton at St Bartholomew's, who was deemed to be entitled to an annuity of ten pounds from the newly-created Representative Church Body.³³

The Irish Church Act had also provided for an enhanced constitutional role for the laity (or, rather, lay men) in the life of the Church. In 1870 there was a meeting of the general vestry to elect a select vestry, diocesan synodsmen and parochial nominators, though it was not until the next century that women were eligible for these positions.³⁴

New and testing times lay ahead for the Church of Ireland. The

dangers to which it felt itself exposed brought about an attitude of defensiveness, and at the same time provided opportunities for the more Protestant of her members to seek to direct policy in the manner that they thought promised greatest safety. That was not the path that commended itself to St Bartholomew's, and it was easy for critics to point out the dangers as they saw them of the policy pursued by Arthur Dawson. He was a disciple of the Tractarians, concerned only, as he put it himself, 'to preach and practise the old-fashioned principles of the Prayer Book.' Though somewhat overshadowed in parish memory by his successor, Richard Travers Smith, who was vicar for a much longer period, it was Dawson who established the tradition for which St Bartholomew's became noted.

Canon Weldon, a curate-assistant of Travers Smith's, and who yielded to none in his admiration for his superior, is on record as having stated that choral worship as St Bartholomew's came to know it might not have been established from the start had Smith been the first Vicar, nor would there have been the same insistence on free and open seats. Dawson himself wrote to tell Smith that he had lost the friendship of Archdeacon Lee, his original patron, who "was angry at the standard of ritual adopted at St Bartholomew's – moderate enough in all conscience."³⁵

Dawson left in 1871 to take up work in England, having left 'Notes' for the benefit of his successor in which he set out the duties and emoluments of the curate 'who has co-operated with me most correctly'.³⁶ Within ten years his health had broken and he was forced to resign from active ministry. He confided to his successor:

My life now seems a perfectly useless one. I suppose it is to read one a lesson of humility that God thus lays one aside. I trust, however, it is not useless as regards myself, but that I am going through that discipline which may prepare one the better for admission through the merits of Christ to the fellowship of the saints.

He died in 1883, the year in which he wrote that letter. One of the windows in the north transept of the church is dedicated to his memory.

³¹ 21 Aug. 1868. Twenty-three passengers of the Irish Mail were burnt beyond recognition, nine being 'burnt to a cinder'.

³² All pinnacles have since then been removed.

³³ RCB Library, p64.27.6

³⁴ Kenneth Milne, 'Disestablishment and the lay response', in Raymond Gillespie and W. G. Neely, *The laity and the Church of Ireland:1000-2000* (Dublin, 2002), pp 236-8.

³⁵ Longworth-Dames, *St Bartholomew's*, p.34.

³⁶ RCB Library p64/28/2.