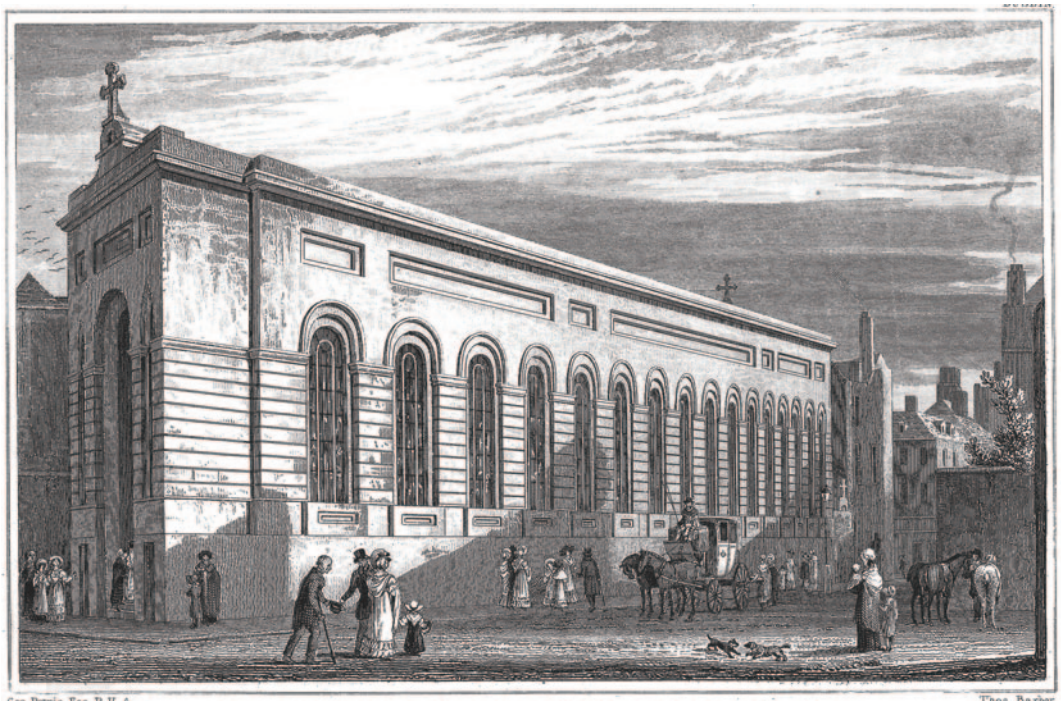

Geo. Petrie. Esq. R.H.A. Thos. Barber.

THE CHURCH OF THE CARMELITE FRIARY, YORK ROW.

Edges, borders and corners: the Whitefriar Street church and early nineteenth-century Catholic architecture

NIAMH NicGHABHANN

THE WORDS *'SPLENDENTI IN TENEBRIS, UT IPSA DIES LUCENTI'* WERE INSCRIBED ON THE ceremonial trowel used by Archbishop Daniel Murray of Dublin to lay the foundation stone for the new Carmelite church located on a site bounded by York Row and Whitefriar Lane on 25th October 1825.[1] Translated as 'shining in the shadows, splendid as the very day', the inscription referred to both the presence of the archbishop and the yet-to-be-realised church building. A later inscription, written by one William Robinson, M.D., was published in *The Patriot* newspaper in 1826.[2] Robinson's text drew attention to the fact that the stone of this sacred edifice was on the same site of the medieval Carmelite church, which had been built in the year 1272 during the reign of Edward I. The inscription described the reigning monarch, George IV, as 'justly beloved by all' for meekness, humanity, and other virtues. It noted that people across diverse religious backgrounds had contributed to the building, and that further donations were desired, concluding with a reference to the Biblical idea that all men should store up treasures in Heaven, where moths and rust cannot corrupt or destroy, and where thieves cannot break in nor steal.[3]

This is, in many ways, very typical of Catholic foundation stone ceremonies of this period. The recognition of donations across religious divisions reflected contemporary ideas of religious toleration and liberality in an era of Catholic political relief.[4] The use of the foundation stone ceremony to launch an appeal for donations to complete the building project was common practice.[5] The praise for the monarch was quite typical of the period, reflective of the continuing need for Catholics to demonstrate their loyalty to the Crown as part of their campaign for Emancipation.[6] It was also not unusual to describe a

1, 2 – George Petrie (1790-1866), THE CHURCH OF THE CARMELITE FRIARY, YORK ROW and INTERIOR OF THE CHURCH OF THE CARMELITE FRIARY
engraved by J. Roberts, published in George Newenham Wright, IRELAND ILLUSTRATED (Dublin, 1831)
(from GEORGE PETRIE – THE REDISCOVERY OF IRELAND'S PAST by Peter Murray (Crawford Art Gallery / Gandon Editions)

3 – The Virgin at Mount Carmel

Frontispiece from A SHORT TREATISE ON THE ANTIQUITY, INSTITUTION, EXCELLENCY, INDULGENCES, PRIVILEGES, ETC., OF THE ANCIENT CONFRATERNITY OF OUR BLESSED LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL, CALLED, THE SCAPULAR (Limerick, 1820). (DS/461 @ Special Collections & Archives, Glucksman Library, University of Limerick)

new Catholic building in metaphors of contrast and transformative change. As Brendan Grimes noted, the new church of St Teresa on Clarendon Street, built for the Discalced Carmelites from the mid-1790s onwards, was described as standing out 'like a jewel' in contrast to the other chapels which crouched 'timidly in the darkest and most loathsome alleys and lanes of the city'.[7] Despite this dramatic language, however, the establishment of an impressive building for Catholic worship was no longer a novelty in Dublin by 1825. The social, political and economic advances made by Catholics over the previous thirty years were most evident in the grand 'Metropolitan chapel' which had been under construction since 1815.[8] As Fergus D'Arcy has outlined in his comprehensive history of the order, the new church for the Carmelite friars required them to move from nearby Cuffe Street, where they had just cleared the debts from the construction of that chapel.[9] Robinson's inscription in *The Patriot* highlighted the rationale for this move: the desire to reoccupy the medieval footprint of the order in the Dublin urban landscape, and to create a link between the pre-Reformation history of the Carmelites and their future operation in the city.

The new church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel was designed by the English architect George Papworth (1781-1855), who had been working in Dublin since 1806.[10] It is often discussed in the context of the shift towards the construction of neoclassical temples for Catholic worship in the first half of the nineteenth century – the 'ornaments to the city' which have been so well described by Brendan Grimes.[11] However, this article aims to consider Catholic building in the pre-Emancipation Dublin landscape as a distinct group and as a precursor to the more triumphant, expressive designs of Patrick Byrne, typified by the grand Ionic temple front of St Paul's on Arran Quay, or St Audoen's Church on High Street. Through a discussion of Papworth's design for the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, this article will explore the different ways that architects in this period had to negotiate fine, yet insistent, lines about the appropriate levels of visibility for Catholics in the Dublin urban sphere.

When first constructed, this building was most typically given an address of York Row, now Whitefriar Place, which was its southern façade. The entrance is now through the priory on Aungier Street, but the original entrance was on to Whitefriar Lane, now Whitefriar Street. Despite the fact that this entrance is now closed, the church is most

often referred to as the 'Whitefriar Street church', and therefore this name is used here. The new building project was financed through donations and borrowings, and the church, although incomplete, was consecrated on 11th November 1827.[12]

The move to Whitefriar Street marked the end of a series of foundations across this part of the city. The Carmelites had a presence on New Row, and then moved to a first, and then a second more suitable location on Ash Street in 1739, with a chapel and friary that was purpose-built for the order.[13] Nicholas Donnelly's edition of the 1749 report on the state and condition of Catholic chapels in the city notes the Ash Street chapel had a painted altarpiece of the crucifixion, with the figures of Elias and Eliseus in Carmelite habits, as well as a 'handsome branch' (a candelabra), with a pulpit and four galleries. He also noted that this chapel had an adjacent house suitable for four resident Carmelites.[14] It was, in other words, small but quite well appointed. In her study of Dublin Catholic chapels in mid-eighteenth-century Dublin, Nuala Burke described this second location on Ash Street as having 'extensive street frontage, with the church adjoined by a tree-lined courtyard'.[15] The expiration of the Ash Street lease required the friars to move to a new priory at French Street, with a chapel at Cuffe Street.[16] The Cuffe Street chapel was completed and dedicated in 1806, which required the community to fundraise extensively in order to offset the building debts.[17] Fergus D'Arcy notes that the site had been willed to Thomas Finny, the key figure in the development of this new location, by the prosperous Catholic Dublin merchant James Corballis. The Corballis family were important supporters of the Metropolitan chapel and were evidently personally invested in the expansion of Catholic Dublin in the early decades of the nineteenth century.[18]

While the circumstances behind the move to Whitefriar Lane are unclear, D'Arcy suggests that it may reflect a breakdown in the relationships between key members of the community, with the new provincial Thomas Coleman and the energetic John Spratt in support of acquiring the new site.[19] The assertion of a tangible link to the pre-Reformation past is certainly in keeping with Spratt's interest in history and in the materiality of the medieval period, evident in his acquisition of a late medieval carved wooden Madonna and Child for the new Whitefriar Street church, as well as ancient stone fragments, and his membership of historical societies.[20] Indeed, as the illustration in the 1820 Carmelite publication on the history of the scapular demonstrates, chapel-building was key to Carmelite identity, given the central legend of the construction of the original chapel to the Virgin at Mount Carmel (Plate 3).[21] In 1823, Spratt and Coleman engaged Mr Wall, a member of an established family of craftsmen and builders, to draw up new plans for a narrow piece of land between Whitefriar Lane (now Whitefriar Street) and York Row (now Whitefriar Place).[22] It was leased originally by the Carmelites for 1,000 years, with an option to purchase outright after seven years. The new site was in a relatively busy ecclesiastical location, with a Methodist almshouse on Whitefriar Lane, and St Peter's Church of Ireland on the site bounded by Aungier Street and Peter's Row.[23]

George Papworth was the architect chosen to design this new church. Papworth had a good track record in working with Dublin Catholic patrons, as he was completing work on the Metropolitan chapel when he took on the Whitefriars project.[24] Fortunately, given the subsequent alterations to the building, Papworth's original design for the Carmelites was captured in George Petrie's drawings of the exterior (Plate 1) and the interior of the

4 – Current exterior of the southern façade of the Whitefriar Street church, taken from Aungier Street

(all colour photographs by the author, 2023-24)

new church (Plates 2, 5).[25] Fergus D'Arcy writes that Papworth was 'constrained and considerably challenged' by what Fr Spratt called a 'narrow strip of ground'. He quotes a writer called Starret, who described the building in 1832 as being a 'new extensive Roman Catholic church, one side of which extends nearly along the entire South side of York Row. It is a plain building, and will require a considerable sum of money to render it complete.'[26] The main entrance to the church consisted of a tall central opening surrounded by an arch, with two lower doors on either side, and a small stone cross over the main doorway.

Although Spratt and others regretted the narrowness of the church, its design was very well received by contemporary commentators.[27] The text accompanying the illustration in George Newenham Wright's *Ireland Illustrated* in 1831 described 'this beautiful and extremely graceful edifice', as a:

> remarkable demonstration of how much may be accomplished at a moderate expense, when taste and judgement accompany the disposition of the means. To an area, two hundred feet in length by only thirty-six in breadth, the architect has succeeded in adapting his design, which is of the most agreeable character. The exterior, as it is represented in the Illustration, exhibits the grand front, overlooking York-Row, as well as the front of the entrance which is presented to Whitefriar Street. The principal front consists of sixteen circular-headed windows, placed at intervals of five feet, having ornamented architraves embracing the heads of each. Above the line of windows are sunken tablets bearing the dedicatory inscription, the summit being finished by a plain cornice, carried over the entrance front also:

> the entrance is by a flight of steps retreating into a lofty cell or loggia. The building is entirely in brick, covered with Roman cement.[28]

This is a long passage, but it is worth quoting because it clearly reflects the extent to which the southern external façade wall was considered the most important and worthy of praise by contemporary commentators. While Starret saw the plainness of the wall as lacking embellishment, others were able to appreciate Papworth's ingenuity in classical forms and his solution in creating a design that overcame, and even made a virtue out of, a very difficult site. His innovative solution was to create a row of repeated, closely spaced windows, which together with the smooth surface of the Roman cement, drew the eye down a long, pleasing vista. A masonry surface would have created too much visual clutter and distracted from the march of windows down the narrow street, so while Roman cement might have seemed like a cheaper option than ashlar for a street front, Papworth made it work to his advantage.

The façade as it appears today is different to that which is represented in Petrie's print, which may reflect subsequent coats of Roman cement (Plate 4). It is unclear whether the 'dedicatory inscription' mentioned in *Ireland illustrated* is the same as the bronze lettering that now adorns the southern wall, or whether this was a later addition, but it is not represented in Petrie's drawing. Further differences include the chamfers evident in the Petrie drawing, absent in the building as it currently stands, a masonry base and simpler window surrounds.[29] These differences are one indication that aspects of the drawing were conjectural rather than drawn from life, reflecting the ideal design and possibly used for fundraising. As was seen with the use of a scale wooden model of the Metropolitan chapel, the production of a compelling image of the future building could be a useful fundraising tool.[30] The simple recession in depth framing the round-headed windows, resting on recessed attic panels with their rectangular detail, themselves supported by a tall plinth at the base which meets the street, could be described as the 'abstract layering of the wall'.[31]

Petrie was the Royal Hibernian Academy's librarian at the time that the illustration was created, and was an admired artist. He had founded the *Dublin Penny Journal* magazine with Caesar Otway around this period, and was involved in producing images for

5 – George Petrie (1790-1866) *INTERIOR OF THE CHURCH OF THE CARMELITE FRIARY*
engraved by J. Roberts, published in George Newenham Wright, IRELAND ILLUSTRATED (Dublin, 1831)
(Norton OS/49 @ Special Collections & Archives, Glucksman Library, University of Limerick)

reproduction in print.[32] Indeed, these images of the new Carmelite church were reproduced in several different books and journals. In its representation of an elegant new Catholic chapel, populated by the somewhat over-awed laity, Petrie's images echo the coloured aquatint published by Rudolf Ackermann of the Sardinian Chapel in London.[33] Even if some of the details of Papworth's original plans, as recorded by Petrie, were not included in the finished building, or perhaps have been obscured by later replastering, the design as it exists today is still very successful. Papworth's design makes the most of the raking light down York Row for the façade to be seen at its best advantage, and therefore used shallow sculptural impressions around the windows to create an interesting, flowing surface that doesn't require deep shadows to be impactful. Perhaps this facility with working with shallow modelling reflects a familiarity with stucco and plaster work, gained through his father's practice.[34] The impact of the sunlight on the southern façade of Papworth's original church has ensured that it remains an eye-catching vista on the hustle and bustle of contemporary Aungier Street.

Papworth's successful and innovative southern façade for the Carmelite church draws attention to the various ways that the architects of Catholic Dublin dealt with awkward sites and street frontage in the first half of the nineteenth century. First of all, it is worth noting that Catholic building in Dublin proceeded at a slightly different pace to the rest of the country. As Nuala Burke and Cormac Begadon, among others, have demonstrated, Catholics had well-appointed places of worship by the end of the eighteenth century.[35] Unlike other parts of the country which undertook grand new buildings at the turn of the nineteenth century, only to demolish and replace many of them by the third quarter of the century, Dublin Catholic places of worship tended to suffice until a grand programme of building was instigated following Emancipation, characterised by the work of Patrick Byrne and John Leeson from the end of the 1820s onwards. These buildings, including the Jesuit church of St Xavier on Gardiner Street (1829), and St Nicholas of Myra on Francis Street (1829), were sufficiently grand to avoid this later fashion for rebuilding and remodelling. Therefore, while many of the most important early nineteenth-century Catholic buildings around the country were entirely replaced, including buildings like St Peter's in Drogheda, designed by Francis Johnston in 1791, and the cathedral at Thurles rebuilt in the Lombardic Romanesque style by J.J. McCarthy between 1864 and 1872, Dublin retains many of the buildings constructed from the late 1820s and 1830s. These surviving buildings include the confident designs of Byrne and his contemporaries built in the first two decades, including the church of SS Michael and John (now Smock Alley Theatre) at Lower Exchange Street (1811-15), St Michan's on North Anne Street (1811), the Metropolitan chapel (now Pro-Cathedral) on Marlborough Street (1815), and Papworth's Whitefriar Street church (1825). These can be considered as a distinct group.

Brendan Grimes describes St Paul's Church on Arran Quay, designed by Byrne in 1835, as the 'first strong visual assertion' of Catholics' new-found confidence in the Dublin streetscape (Plate 6).[36] Writing about its granite portico, Grimes argues that 'considerable proportion of the building costs were expended on the front, compared to the money spent on providing accommodation. Catholic church builders were learning that to take on the responsibility of making an architectural presence was expensive.'[37] St Paul's has an extremely advantageous site, with the potential to be viewed from across

6 – St Paul's church, Arran Quay, Dublin (taken from Fr Mathew Bridge)

the river and from a distance in either direction, so it is no wonder that considerable funds were spent on the exterior. The church of St Nicholas of Myra, designed by John Leeson, is set back from the street and therefore has adequate space for a pedimented temple front to step forward.[38] The church of St Francis Xavier on Gardiner Street, by Fr Bartholomew Esmonde and John Benjamin Keane, and St Andrew's (1832), by James Bolger, on Westland Row have their entrances on the street front. Both manage the transition from the public street to the space of the church in similar way: St Francis Xavier is stepped back to create space for a more dramatic portico, with the outer edge of the Ionic columns continuing the line of the Georgian street front (Plate 7).

The entrance to St Andrew's on Westland Row occupies a substantial length of that street but is hampered by the fact that it is on a relatively narrow thoroughfare, with the best and most frequent views available as one looks at the building from an angle, standing at the top or the bottom of the street (Plate 8). This is particularly evident at the level of the roofline, where the statue of St Andrew with his X-shaped cross marks the significance of the building, but which is difficult to view when standing head on. The architect James Bolger overcame this limitation by creating a bold contrast between the solid side bays, articulated with pilasters, and the dark void at the central entrance, with the main doorway stepped back behind full columns in the round. This means that some space in the nave is lost, but the church is distinguished from the street line, with a sense of drama created around the entrance, together with a very successful sense of depth,

making good use of light and shadow. The applied Greek ornament attempts to articulate the street façade of the building but is heavier and less successful in stone than Papworth's light touch and abstraction in Roman cement.

These four examples date from the 1830s, constructed in the wake of the passage of the Roman Catholic Relief Act (10 George IV, c.7), popularly known as the Act of Emancipation. Papworth's design is part of an earlier group of Dublin buildings constructed during a period of increasing toleration. Restrictions on the use of bells and steeples in Catholic chapels were in place in 1782, leading to legal ambiguity for patrons and builders.[39] In 1806, the Archbishop of Dublin shared a legal opinion that bells and steeples remained prohibited, despite the passage of several relief Acts.[40] As late as 1843, a group of Protestant activists attempted to revive the residual restriction, by challenging the ringing of bells by the Catholic church of St. Paul's, Arran Quay. They were advised, however, that no prosecution could be maintained against a Catholic clergyman.[41] Papworth's church for the Carmelites, together with SS Michael and John, St Michan's and the Metropolitan chapel were built during the still-precarious advancement of civil rights, and at a time of some legal uncertainty about the Catholic architectural presence in public space.

In the wake of the violence of 1798, which had seen a number of Catholic chapels attacked throughout the country, the Catholic architectural presence in public space had to be carefully calibrated at a point between appropriate dignity and potentially dangerous ostentation.[42] This group of churches all negotiate their presence in the built landscape in different ways, in contrast to the direct, confident address of the post-Emancipation examples discussed above.[43] It is worth bearing in mind that the first decades of the nineteenth century were far from a golden age for building by the Established Church of Ireland. This

9 – Church of SS Michael and John (now Smock Alley Theatre), Lower Exchange Street, Dublin

opposite

7 – Church of St Francis Xavier, Gardiner Street, Dublin

8 – St Andrew's Church, Westland Row, Dublin

general lack of ambition in ecclesiastical building and the lacklustre state of the Dublin skyline was lamented by James Malton in the text that accompanied his 1799 *Picturesque and descriptive view of the city of Dublin*.[44] One of the few spires built during this period was that of St George's Church on Hardwicke Place, and the major statement of ecclesiastical architectural innovation was the Chapel Royal at Dublin Castle, both designed by Francis Johnston.[45]

In his 1825 *Historical guide to the city of Dublin*, George Newenham Wright described the chapel of SS Michael and John as having 'two fronts of hewn stone, equally beautiful, and in a highly-finished style of pointed architecture'.[46] The principal front was that on the north façade, facing on to the then narrow Lower Exchange Street that was 'accessible by a double flight of steps', an arrangement that survives today.[47] Newenham Wright notes that this main front was 'visible from Wood Quay, and an opening is left, through which this very elegant building is seen, not only from Wood Quay, but also from the opposite side of the river'.[48] This attention to sightlines points to the significance of Catholic visibility in public space.

The main façade of SS Michael and John, as a raised central doorway, has a relatively flat façade, articulated with Gothic mouldings around the door and window, and a central bay that timidly breaks through the horizonal roofline with a flattened arch surmounted by a stone cross. Sculpted plaques with the portraits of the chapel's patron saints are inserted below the corbels at the springing points of this central arch (Plate 9). The original entrance to St Michan's on North Anne Street has a similar treatment, but the early Ordnance Survey maps indicate that this front stepped back from the street line.[49] The architect of the Metropolitan chapel, now the pro-Cathedral, made the side façade work as

10 – The Metropolitan Catholic Chapel
engraved by T. Ranson from a drawing by George Petrie for PICTURE OF DUBLIN
(NLI ET A291, courtesy National Library of Ireland)

hard as the main portico front entrance, again reflecting the fact that the architectural impact that the building could make would be restricted by the narrow streetscape, and that people would encounter it from an angle. Therefore, the side façade is as highly designed as the main entrance, and this is also evident in the images of the building that were produced (Plate 10). Newenham Wright also noted this in his 1825 *Historical guide*, writing that 'the sides of the chapel may be considered fronts also, being finished in a very beautiful and singular style'.[50] As was the case with Papworth's York Row façade, the ingenuity of the architect in making a virtue out of a tricky site was recognised and celebrated.

This careful negotiation of the street line by architects of pre-Emancipation Catholic buildings is also evident in urban contexts outside Dublin. While many chapels from this period were located off main thoroughfares, those that were more prominent balanced between making an architectural statement and observing the required spatial reticence. The entrance façade of John Roberts' cathedral in Waterford is stepped back from the line of the street at Barronstrand, with engaged giant Ionic pilasters carrying a pediment. This is the original design from the 1790s, as reflected in John Milner's near-contemporary account.[51] By the middle of the nineteenth century, piers topped by urns, with cast-iron railings and gates, had been constructed to distinguish between the commercial premises along Barronstrand and the place of worship (Plate 11). A pedimented portico with columns in the round was originally intended to replace these piers, but the foundations could not be secured.[52] At Kells in county Meath, Francis Johnston designed

11 – 'Catholic Cathedral, Waterford'
engraved and published by Newman & Co., 48 Watling St., London. between 1860-1880
(NLI, ET A733, courtesy National Library of Ireland) (band of detail missing on only illus-file available)

a new Catholic chapel which contemporary maps show as fronting directly on to the fashionable Headfort Place.[53] While this building was demolished, surviving drawings show a central bay above the doorway with crenelations, articulating the entrance.[54] While later streetfront churches were able to use height, as most dramatically demonstrated by the spire of SS Augustine and John (1860-75, designed by Ashlin and Pugin) on Dublin's Thomas Street (Plate 12), such vertical design solutions were not availed of by architects in the early decades of the century. In many of the churches built in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, the addition of figurative statuary to the roofline added height and further iconographic signification of the building's purpose.

While Papworth's design ingenuity was admired in its day, the narrow footprint of the Whitefriar Street church soon led to its expansion. There are five identifiable phases of the church's development, beginning with this original design. The second phase involved the construction of a new block to the north in the early 1840s, which doubled the accommodation of the church and which was decorated in paint which imitated coloured marbles by Patrick Boylan of Grafton Street.[55] Colm Dixon quotes the appreciation of Boylan's work published in the *Irish Catholic Directory* of 1844, which compared it to the 'gorgeously ornamented churches' at Munich or the Madelaine at Paris.[56] Christine Casey in *Buildings of Dublin* notes that this 1840s northern block led to Papworth's original block becoming a south aisle. Rather than functioning as an aisle, however, it remained the liturgical focal point for the building as it appears that the high altar remained

12 – Church of SS Augustine and John, Thomas Street, Dublin

opposite

13 – Undated drawing of the interior of the Whitefriar Street church

(illus 13-15 reproduced with the permission of Fr Simon Nolan, Prior of the Whitefriar Street Church)

in Papworth's original block, or in the south-east corner of the church, until the 1930s.

A third phase included the involvement of the leading ecclesiastical architect of the period, James Joseph McCarthy. D'Arcy notes that permission was secured in January 1857 to enlarge the church further, and in 1858 a third block was constructed to the north.[57] However, while McCarthy's addition seems to have resulted in a tripartite arrangement, photographic evidence from the 1920s suggests that the Ionic high altar depicted in Petrie's images of the original interior remained in the southernmost block, as it had following the 1840s expansion. The arrangement, therefore, was of the 'nave' in that original southern Papworth block abutted by two aisles to the north, with the central aisle terminating with a new chapel dedicated to St Joseph. This layout of the altar in the Papworth block seems to be the arrangement evident in the 1864 Ordnance survey plan of the building reproduced by Brendan Grimes in his *Commodious temples* book, with the main entrance and the high altar still facing each other in the southern block of the building.[58] It appears that galleries were constructed in the original Papworth block, and in the 1840s aisle block.

Two undated drawings, held in the Carmelite collection together with photographs from the 1920s, are valuable evidence of McCarthy's scheme for the interior of the church, and of how he managed the transition from Papworth's original block (Plate 13). Papworth's original design included engaged Tuscan pilaster framing round-headed windows along the interior of the south wall. The transition from this original design to the first of the two new aisles was managed – either by McCarthy or by the architect of the 1840s extension – by echoing the top half of the pilasters in the wall that mirrored Papworth's original scheme, but removing several of the bays to provide for much larger arches. This was necessary to allow for clear lines of vision from the gallery and the

northern-most aisle through to the altar. In McCarthy's central aisle, there is a shift from Papworth's Tuscan pilasters to more decorated Corinthian capitals and columns in the round. It is unclear, however, how much the evidence of these drawings reflect work from the 1840s, or whether this was all part of the reworking by McCarthy in the 1850s. These undated images also reveal the tripartite windows in the northern aisle, demonstrating a full step-change in style in the second new aisle from a stripped-back neo-classicism to a Lombardic Romanesque.

The Builder magazine gives a comprehensive note on the works to be undertaken by McCarthy, noting the influence of the Tuscan Romanesque on his style. This included the information that 'an aisle has been built on the north side of this church' in the 'Italian Romanesque style, resembling that of San Miniato, near Florence'. It also noted that the 'windows are arranged in semicircular-headed triplets', with 'internal jamb-shafts, curved capitals, and moulded and carved arches'. The ceiling is described as 'open, and will be decorated in colours'. As to the exterior, it was in 'calp, with granite dressings; the interior, Caen stone. Mr Robert Farrell is the contractor. A large addition is being built to the priory. Mr John Rooney, of Dublin, is the contractor.'[59] An undated photograph of a forty-hour devotion held at the Whitefriar Street church in the central aisle provides visual evidence of McCarthy's open wooden ceiling, similar to the open-work timbers at San Miniato al Monte in Florence, as well as his use of independent, fully articulated columns with Corinthian capitals (Plate 14). While McCarthy is more usually associated with the Gothic Revival style, this is an interesting early example of his engagement with Romanesque design, and a precursor to his major monument in that form, the rebuilt Cathedral of the Assumption in Thurles. Photographs from the 1920s are evidence of a circular ceiling

14 – Undated photograph of a Quarantore (40 hours devotion) in the Whitefriar Street church

opposite

15 – Photograph (c.1920s) of the high altar at the Whitefriar Street church

overleaf

16 – View towards the new altar, Whitefriar Street church

light over the high altar inserted into Papworth's original ceiling, creating a greater focus on this area of the church and perhaps compensating for its lack of centrality in this new layout (Plate 15).

The Whitefriar Street church, then, was shaped by three phases of development which followed each other in relatively quick succession. This resulted in a church building that was somewhat unusual in its arrangement, with the high altar in the south aisle and a mix of styles that expert architects like McCarthy sought to connect across the building. In this, it wasn't unusual. The piecemeal extension of many Catholic buildings throughout the nineteenth century quite frequently led to this sort of result, and it may suggest why such a radical step was taken in the twentieth century to carry out a complete reordering to switch the orientation of the church and to have a much more typical central high altar. The priory was rebuilt with a new entrance added by architect Charles B. Powell (1881-1960) in 1914-16.[60] Fundraising notices for the 'rebuilding' and 'reconstruction' of the Whitefriar Street church were published throughout the 1930s and 1940s, and these funds were used for a complete rebuilding of the interior. These changes, which can be seen as phase four, swept away most of McCarthy's reworking of the interior. The changes included the raising of the ceiling in the central block, which now became the nave, rib vault decoration in the nave ceiling, the inclusion of a clerestory with tripartite windows, the reworking of the aisle ceiling to a standardised pattern, and changing McCarthy's sturdy columns to lighter columns probably reinforced with steel (Plate 16).

This transformation was completed by the reorientation of the high altar in the 1950s, which is the fifth phase, and which involved the bold step to move the altar from one end of the church to the other, and to centralise its position.[61] Newspaper evidence

advertising events in aid of the Carmelite Church Reconstruction Fund throughout from the late 1930s and early 1940s suggests that the body of the church was reconstructed first, with a temporary sanctuary in use, followed by the reworking of the sanctuary. The changed position of the high altar was given a new symbolic anchor with the construction of a new 'magnificent baldacchino' as part of the scheme designed by John J. Robinson (1887-1965). The new sanctuary was blessed by Archbishop John Charles McQuaid on 17th May 1956. The subsequent movement of the organ pipes behind this baldacchino changed its original impact, becoming massive and austere. It was described in the *Irish Independent* newspaper as reflecting 'chaste simplicity', with 'Venetian glass mosaic in blue and green, surmounted by a gilt cross', supported on 'four fluted columns of Italian marble which rest on blocks of polished black marble'.[62] The pared-back richness and use of scale in Robinson's design reflects his superb, yet overlooked church of Corpus Christi on Griffith Avenue, built between 1938 and 1841, and is also suggestive of the influence of Westminster Cathedral, which he would have experienced as a student in London.[63] The Whitefriar Street baldacchino, crafted by Earley and Company, beautifully illustrates Robinson's ideal that 'the architectural language of a church should be comprehensible to the people' and that 'art and architecture must search onwards through ever-changing phases into a new age. There ought to be poetry in architecture, the kind of thing whose beauty takes one's breath away.'[64]

The Whitefriar Street church has evolved from its original narrow footprint through several phases of development to become a busy place of worship in Dublin's city centre. While the contemporary interior is undoubtedly a mid-twentieth-century scheme, the treatment of the aisle walls maintains the rhythm established by Papworth, with its engaged Tuscan pilasters depicted in Petrie's image of the interior. Papworth's original sixteen windows remain on the exterior, albeit with one now blocked up, the remainder filled with very fine stained glass by the Earley firm and by Mayer of Munich. While some other elements of the interior scheme, including the Ionic high altar with its statuary, are no longer in the church, the essential elements of Papworth's design have proven resilient throughout many changes. While it now might not claim as much attention as it did when first constructed, the southern external façade of Papworth's church for the Carmelites also retains its restrained elegance, and is therefore quite deserving of the accolade as a light in the darkness, heralding the grand age of Catholic building in Dublin.

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ENDNOTES

1 *The Patriot*, 5th Nov 1825.
2 *The Patriot*, 21st Nov 1826.
3 Matthew 6:19-21.
4 Cormac Begadon, 'The infrastructure of Catholicism', in Liam Chambers (ed.), *The Oxford history of British and Irish Catholicism, Volume III: relief, revolution and revival, 1746-1329* (Oxford, 2023) 120.
5 Niamh NicGhabhann, '"A development of practical Catholic Emancipation": laying the foundations for the Roman Catholic urban landscape, 1850-1900', *Urban History*, 46, no. 1, 2019, 44-61.
6 Dáire Keogh, *'The French disease': the Catholic Church and Irish radicalism, 1790-1800* (Dublin, 1993).
7 Brendan Grimes, *Commodious temples: Roman Catholic church building in nineteenth-century Dublin* (Dublin, 2010) 7.
8 Michael McCarthy, 'Dublin's Greek Pro-Cathedral', in Dáire Keogh and James Kelly (eds), *History of the Catholic diocese of Dublin*

(Dublin, 2000).

9 Fergus D'Arcy, *Raising Dublin, raising Ireland: a friar's campaign* (Dublin, 2018) 36-50.

10 George Papworth is listed as the architect of the new church in a variety of contemporary sources, including the *Dublin Penny Journal*, 27th Oct 1832, which carried an illustration of the interior on the front page. A list of Papworth's works and an outline of his career is published in the *Dictionary of Irish Architects 1720-1940*, https://dia.ie/architects/view/ 4269/Papworth-George (accessed 19th Dec 2023).

11 Kate Jordan, 'Architecture and buildings: building the post-Emancipation church', in Susan O'Brien and Carmen Mangion (eds), *The Oxford History of British and Irish Catholicism, Vol. IV: building identity* (Oxford, 2023) 56-76, 74; Brendan Grimes, *Majestic shrines and graceful sanctuaries: the church architecture of Patrick Byrne 1783-1864* (Dublin, 2009).

12 D'Arcy, *Raising Dublin*, 74-7.

13 *ibid*., 36-37.

14 Nicholas Donnolly, *Roman Catholic chapels in Dublin A.D. 1749* (Dublin, 1904), 17-18.

15 Nuala Burke, 'A hidden church? The structure of Catholic Dublin in the mid-eighteenth century', *Archivium Hibernicum*, 32, 1974, 81-92: 89.

16 D'Arcy, *Raising Dublin*, 45.

17 *ibid*.

18 *ibid*., 48-49. The relationship between the Corballis family and the Catholic church in Dublin is discussed in Deirdre Raftery, *Teresa Ball and Loreto education: convents and the Catholic world 1794-1875* (Dublin, 2022), and in Danny Parkinson, 'The Corballis Family of Nuttstown, Co Dublin and Rosemount, Roebuck and Donnybrook', *Dublin Historical Record*, 60, no. 2, 2000, 171-89.

19 D'Arcy, *Raising Dublin*, 49.

20 *ibid*., 69

21 *A short treatise on the antiquity, institution, excellency, indulgences, privileges, etc., of the ancient Confraternity of Our Blessed Lady of Mount Carmel, called, the Scapular* (Limerick, 1820).

22 D'Arcy, *Raising Dublin*, 48.

23 *ibid*., 65-67.

24 Brendan Grimes, 'The architecture of Dublin's neoclassical Roman Catholic temples 1803-62' (unpublished PhD thesis, NCAD, 2005) 73.

25 George Petrie's drawings, engraved by J. Roberts, were published in George Newenham Wright, *Ireland illustrated: from original drawings* (Dublin, 1831), and in William Frederick Wakeman, *Dublin delineated* (Dublin, 1831).

26 D'Arcy, *Raising Dublin*, 68, quoting M. Starrat, *History of ancient and modern Dublin: or, visitors' guide to the metropolis of Ireland* (Dublin, 1832).

27 D'Arcy, *Raising Dublin*, 68.

28 Wright, *Ireland illustrated*, 36.

29 The chamfers, had they been included, would have further emphasised the horizontal sweep of the building down York Row.

30 The wooden model of the Metropolitan chapel is discussed by Edward McParland in 'Pro-Cathedral carved in wood', RTÉ Archives, 1974, https://www.rte.ie/archives/2019/0307/1034840-pro-cathedral-model/ (acc. 19th Dec 2023).

31 Edward McParland, *The language of architectural classicism: from looking to seeing* (Farnham, 2024), 108. In its concern with edges, borders and corners, this essay is inspired by Eddie's teaching and writing.

32 David Cooper, 'Petrie, George', *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (acc. 19th Dec 2023).

33 Various artists (including Thomas Rowlandson, Auguste Charles Pugin and John Bluck), 'The Roman Catholic Chapel, Lincoln's Inn Fields', in the *Microcosm of London* portfolio published by Rudolf Ackermann, 1st April 1808, hand-coloured etching and aquatint, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (17.3.1167-137).

34 George Papworth was the third son of John Papworth (1750-1799), who was a master stuccoer, a detail noted in the biography of his older brother, John Buonarotti Papworth, Oxford Reference https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100304804 (acc. 8th Jan. 2024).

35 Burke, 'A hidden church?', and Cormac Begadon, 'The renewal of Catholic religious culture in eighteenth-century Dublin' in J. Bergin, E. Magennis, L. Ní Mhungaile, and P. Walsh (eds), *New perspectives on the Penal Laws* (Dublin, 2011).

36 Grimes, *Majestic shrines*, 51.

37 *ibid*., 54.

38 Grimes, *Commodious temples,* 18-19.

39 21 & 22 Geo. III, c.24: Act for the further relief of His Majesty's subjects of this kingdom [of Ireland], professing the popish religion (1782) explicitly noted that no benefits from the act would extend to any 'popish ecclesiastic' who officiated in a church or chapel with a steeple or bell. Therefore, the legal capacity to purchase land or to take out longer leases on properties, both required for the construction of Catholic

places of worship, would have been undermined should a bell or steeple be in evidence. 33 Geo. III, c.21: Act for the relief of His Majesty's Popish, or Roman Catholic subjects of Ireland (1793).

40 Hugh Fenning, 'Troy to Bray: letters from Dublin to Thurles, 1792-1817', *Archivium Hibernicum*, 55 (2001), 48-215: 110.

41 'Catholic steeples and bells', *Cork Examiner*, 6th Nov 1843, 1.

42 The burning of Catholic chapels in the aftermath of the 1798 Rebellion is discussed in James G. Patterson, 'White terror: counter-revolutionary violence in south Leinster, 1798-1801', *Eighteenth-century Ireland / Iris an dá chultúr, xv* (2000) 38-53.

43 It is worth noting that the 1829 Act aimed at restricting the financial and legal capacity of the male religious orders, and also explicitly addressed the Catholic presence in public space, beyond the place of worship. Kevin Costello, '"Inoperative but insulting:" residues of the Penal Laws, 1829-1920', in K. Costello and N. Howlin (eds.), *Law and religion in Ireland: 1700-1970* (London, 2021) 109-36. As Edward McParland has noted, the legal restrictions did not hamper the building activities of the Dominicans at Pope's Quay in Cork. Edward McParland, 'Chapel or church? The case of St Mary's, Pope's Quay, Cork', in R. Gillespie and R.F. Foster (eds), *Irish provincial cultures in the long eighteenth-century: making the middle sort: essays for Toby Barnard* (Dublin, 2012) 231-42.

44 James Malton, *A picturesque and descriptive view of the city of Dublin displayed in a series of the most interesting scenes taken in the year 1791* (London, 1799).

45 Judith Hill, 'Architecture in the aftermath of Union: building the Viceregal chapel in Dublin Castle, 1801-15', *Architectural History*, LX (2017) 183-217.

46 George Newenham Wright, *Historical Guide to the city of Dublin* (London, 1825), 91.

47 *ibid*.

48 *ibid*.

49 An image of the 1811-14 west front of St Michan's can be found at https://www.ribapix.com/st-michan-roman-catholic-church-halston-street-dublin-the-west-front-on-north-anne-street_riba93806# (acc. 8th Jan. 2024).

50 Newenham Wright, *Historical Guide*, 86.

51 John Milner, *An inquiry into certain vulgar opinions concerning the Catholic inhabitants and the antiquities of Ireland, in a series of letters from thence, addressed to a Protestant gentleman in England* (London, 1808) 250.

52 The piers and railings, now removed, are depicted in 'Catholic Cathedral, Waterford', eng. & pub. by Newman & Co., 48 Watling St., London, between 1860 and 1880 (NLI, ET A733). The details of the planned portico are outlined in Patrick Power, *Waterford & Lismore: a compendious history of the united dioceses* (Dublin and New York, 1937) 271.

53 The site of Johnson's chapel at Kells is depicted in Anngret Simms with Katharine Simms, *Irish Historic Towns Atlas (IHTA), no. 4, Kells* (Dublin, 1990) 5.

54 Francis Johnston's drawings for the chapel at Kells are held in the Irish Architectural Archive, Murray Collection, nos 886-90.

55 Christine Casey, *The buildings of Ireland: Dublin* (New Haven and London, 2005) 471. The erection of this new block was undertaken around the same time as the construction of the new accommodation for the friars at Aungier Street, with the foundation stone laid on 9th July 1840. D'Arcy, *Raising Dublin*, 75.

56 Colm Dixon, 'An appreciation of the present Carmelite buildings at Whitefriar Street', in Anselm Corbett and Daphne Pochin Mould (eds), *Whitefriar Street Church: a short guide* (Dublin, 1964).

57 D'Arcy, *Raising Dublin*, 316.

58 Brendan Grimes, *Commodious temples*, 17.

59 *The Builder*, 24th April 1858.

60 Casey, *Buildings of Dublin*, 471. Photographs of the Carmelite friary with its red-brick exterior prior to Powell's cement-rendered reworking are published in Corbett and Mould, *Whitefriar Street Church*, 13,

61 If one enters the church at present, the original Papworth-designed altar would have been located beside the Child of Prague statue at the end of the southern aisle. The 1920s photographs show a circular window over this altar. This was removed in the reworking of the aisle ceilings. There is, however, a circular window over the shrine of Our Lady of Dublin, and it may be the case that the window was reused here.

62 *Irish Independent*, 17th May 1956.

63 Robinson's time in London as a student is outlined in Lawrence William White, 'Robinson, John Joseph', *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (acc. 9th Jan 2024).

64 *Irish Independent*, 24th Apr 1955.