

# ON THE SITE OF "A TEMPLE BY CHICHESTER,"

AS ETCHED BY JOHN DUNSTALL,

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SINCE the publication, in the fifth volume of the *Sussex Arch. Collections* (p. 277), of copies of two etchings executed in the time of Charles II, representing "a temple by Chichester,"<sup>1</sup> it has naturally been an object of antiquarian curiosity to decide, if possible, what ecclesiastical building in the neighbourhood of that city was intended to be thus designated.

As the most characteristic feature in the building was the circular termination of one part of it, it was natural to turn in the first instance to such churches in the neighbourhood as possessed an apsidal termination to the chancel; such as Up-Waltham and East-Marden. Independently, however, of the consideration, that no view of either of these churches could correspond to one of the etchings by exhibiting the circular portion *to the left* hand, and yet at the same time, having the Sussex Downs *to the north*, simply because a spectator must *himself* stand *north* of those churches, in order to have the circular east-end to his left hand;—independently of this, a

<sup>1</sup> In addition to the notices of the artist's family at p. 279, vol. V, others have been found by the Rev. Dr. Wellesley in the register of his own parish of Woodmancote, from which the following are extracts, all tending to confirm the opinion that John Dunstall was a Sussex man.

1622 "Petter Dunstall maryed the widow Reynoles the second of December." She was probably Anne Costel, married to Edward Reynolds, Sept. 7, 1604, whose

husband was buried Dec. 7, 1620. Peter was buried March 20, 1627, and his widow Jan. 24, 1628.

1623 "Thomas the sonne of Peter Dunstall, baptised the xth of Januarie, was buried the 25 day of Julie, 1625." "John Dunstall married Elizabeth Parson, January 16, 1623," but their names do not again appear in the parish books. "Mary Dunstall a mayd was buried on Midsummer day, 1644."

closer examination of Dunstall's etchings seems to indicate no mere apsidal termination, but a circular body or main building, with a smaller portion of square or slightly oblong form attached to it; in fact, a circular nave, the position of the Downs proving the round part to lie to the west, with a square chancel. It is further perceived, that this circular nave is covered with a shelving roof, surmounted by a smaller circular part, with a conical capping. The windows in the lower part are placed at the intercardinal points. In all these respects, the building represented in the etchings accords exactly with the well-known type of the celebrated round churches, built more or less in imitation of the church of the "Holy Sepulchre" at Jerusalem; of which four or five are found in this country, viz. at London (the Temple church), Cambridge, Northampton, and Maplestead. This view as to its character is entirely confirmed by the title rudely inscribed on one of the etchings, "a *Temple* by Chichester;" this name being, as Dr. Wellesley has observed, often given, by the Knights *Templars*, to these round churches.

Since it is certain that no building answering to this description now exists near Chichester, the result of this more careful examination leads us to inquire, not, what *building* near Chichester is to be identified with the etching, but what locality near Chichester can be pointed out as a probable *site* for the round church, which seems to have existed thereabouts in the seventeenth century?

One site which, with some show of probability, has been suggested, is that of the Hospital of St. James, or the Lepers' Hospital, some remains of which still survive at a short distance to the eastward of the city. The situation accords very well with the etchings, the Downs being immediately in view, and the building occupying somewhat of a mound. A tablet placed in modern times on the outside refers it to the reign of Hen. I, a date according very well with the evidently Norman character of the "Temple." A Lepers' Hospital of this date existed at Cambridge, and its chapel survives; and since these establishments for lepers belong mostly to the time of the Crusades, which were the means of introducing the disease into Europe, it would be by no means unlikely that the chapel or church of such an institution, might be built after

the "Holy Sepulchre" type. But the truth is, that this date seems to be erroneously assigned; for there is documentary evidence (quoted by Dallaway) which assigns the foundation of the Lepers' Hospital to *Seffrid II*, temp. *Hen. II*, not *Hen. I*. Moreover, on examining the existing remains of the building, it turns out that its western termination was certainly not circular, but square, the ancient quoins still remaining.

There is a site, however, on the opposite or western side of the city, whose claims seem to be better founded. The parish of St. Bartholomew, outside the city-walls, had for nearly two hundred years been without a church, until (about twenty years since) the present structure was erected. No representation of the original church, destroyed or dilapidated in the siege of Chichester, in 1642, has hitherto been known to exist. It is possible, therefore, that the old church may have been the "Temple by Chichester," of the etchings: and there is one circumstance which materially strengthens this conjecture. It is this, that, until the reign of *Hen. VIII*, the parish of St. Bartholomew was called the parish of *SAINT SEPULCHRE*, and is so designated in the "King's book." There is every reason to believe that this dedication was never bestowed but upon such churches as were built in imitation of the church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem; and if this be so, it follows that there certainly was, at one time a round church or "Temple," standing as the church of this parish; nor is there any reason why it may not have existed down to the time of the siege of Chichester in 1642. One presumption, indeed, there is against it, (*valeat quantum*) that from the time of Queen Elizabeth downwards, the church of this parish, as appears by the registers, has borne the dedication of St. Bartholomew. Such a change is generally indicative of a re-erection or extensive reconstruction of a church: thus the Cathedral Church of Chichester had its dedication changed from that of the Holy Trinity to its present one of St. Peter, on the occasion of its being so materially reconstructed by Bishop *Seffrid II*, in 1199. But, on the other hand, the brief period which elapsed from the date of the "King's Book" to that of the commencement of the registers, was a time in which very few churches were built, and it seems, therefore, more likely that the change of designation arose from some

other cause, than from any material alteration in the structure of the church.

In all other respects, the site of the old St. Bartholomew Church seems to correspond, most satisfactorily, with the conditions required by the engravings, and those conditions are somewhat peculiar.

1. The "Temple" is placed upon a mound, having a sharpish ascent both from the south and west of the church, so much so, that steps are cut from the very church-door, on the south, to the level of the plain.

2. The "Temple" is of very small dimensions, as appears from the large proportion of it which the door occupies. The mound on which it stands, moreover, is itself so small, as to be almost entirely covered by the building.

3. The view of the "Temple" taken from the south-west shows the Downs, with a lower range of rising ground below them, as a background.

Now the churchyard of St. Bartholomew's consists for the most part of a small but very remarkable mound. From the West Street its northern end rises sharply to a height of about ten feet, and forms altogether a striking exception to the uniform level of the land on every side of it. On the east and west, the elevation though less abrupt, is still considerable; on the south there is the least appearance of it, but this evidently arises from the ground at the foot of the mound having been there raised so as to form a platform for the present church, which stands not on the site of the old church, but southward of it, and indeed outside of the ancient churchyard. A careful survey of the ground will satisfy us that the steepness of the mound on this side was fully equal to what is represented in the engraving.

The old church, even if it entirely covered the mound, would not have exceeded the most limited dimensions.

The crown of the little hill, exhibits a tolerably well defined circular area of about fifteen to twenty feet in diameter, narrowing towards the east to about twelve or fifteen feet, and its length is from thirty to forty feet. Its western slope is cut off now by a wall, as of old by a hedge, while the eastern, as in the engraving, slopes gradually away.

The houses of West Street render it difficult to obtain a

view of the Downs and the churchyard at the same time, but, by comparing different points of view, the line of hills, upper and lower, answer very sufficiently to the requirements of the etchings.

Another kind of evidence may be adduced in confirmation, as far as it goes, of the view here maintained; that of a map of the City of Chichester, bearing date 1769. The map of itself is of too recent a date to illustrate our subject, but in one corner of it is a plan "As the City was in 1610," exhibiting a rude representation of each church in its place. The rudeness of the general execution forbids us to expect any very accurate delineation of the peculiar features of a round church, but thus much may safely be affirmed, that of all the churches represented, that which stands as St. Bartholomew's comes the nearest to that type, and may not improbably have been intended for it. All the others have either taller towers, as St. Toolies (*i.e.* St. Olaves) or more decided spires, as "St. Andrew's;" or mere roof-turrets, as "St. Martynes" and "the Pallant." "St. Bartholme" alone has a short round tower, broad for its height, with a conical cap. This is perhaps as near an approach as could be looked for to the "St. Sepulchres" form of church, and it is also strikingly small. The South door in the Tower, though it accords with our engraving, must not be much insisted upon; as this feature seems to enter into the map-maker's conventional idea of a church tower. It further appears from this map, that in the seventeenth century very few houses existed between St. Bartholomew's Church and the West gate of the city; thus the view of the hill, at present shut out by the West Street houses, was at that time unimpeded, and would appear in a view of the church from the south-west, as in John Dunstall's etching.

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